the psychologist
vol 28 no 5 | may 2015
www.thepsychologist.org.uk

The political animal

A special feature on the eve of the United Kingdom General Election

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Promoting excellence in psychology

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April 2015 issue
45,232 dispatched

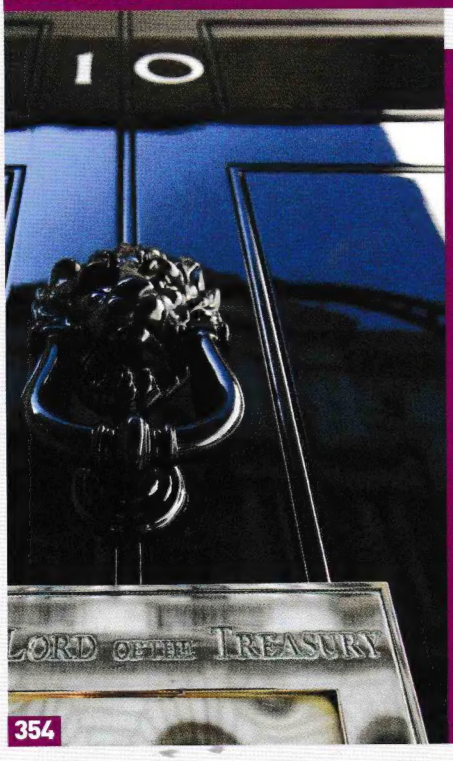
Printed by
Warners Midlands plc on 100 per cent recycled paper. Please re-use or recycle.

ISSN 0952-8229

Cover
10 Downing Street, the official residence of the First Lord of the Treasury, a role usually held by the Prime Minister

the psychologist...

...features



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The Psychologist is the monthly publication of The British Psychological Society. It provides a forum for communication, discussion and controversy among all members of the Society, and aims to fulfil the main object of the Royal Charter, *'to promote the advancement and diffusion of a knowledge of psychology pure and applied'*.

the psychologist
vol 28 no 5 | may 2015

Three years ago
Go to www.thepsychologist.org.uk for our archive, including a special feature on replication (also available in digital edition at tinyurl.com/psycho0512)

the issue

Amongst a glut of political coverage on the eve of the UK General Election, I hope you will stomach our own feast. The authors make some fascinating links across the discipline to shed some light on how to get voters to the ballot box, what happens when they are there, how we can support and develop politicians, and the influence of our celebrity culture on politics.

The pieces are not 'politically charged', but writing in *The Psychologist* can be and has been. Although I try hard to keep my own politics out of the publication (yet over the years readers have labelled me as everything from 'war-mongering neo-con' to 'bleeding heart liberal'!), I am more than happy to receive 'political' pieces if they are backed by evidence and relevant to our audience. At a Society conference once I listened to Steve Reicher, one of the most passionate and political psychologists I know, rail against the 'rhetoric of tediousness' which affects much of psychology. Political debate is rarely tedious, so it will always find a place in our pages.

Dr Jon Sutton
Managing Editor @psychmag

Big picture centre-page pull-out
Are prisoners calmer when their cells are pink? Image from research by **Oliver Genschow**. Words by Christian Jarrett for our Research Digest

In defence of inferential statistics

In February *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* (an American Psychological Association journal) announced that it was banning the reporting of null hypothesis significance testing procedures (NHSTP) and confidence intervals (CI) (Trafimow & Marks, 2015). We are writing to express our hope that the journals published by the British Psychological Society will not be lured into similarly banning CIs and distancing psychology from medical research in which CIs are routinely employed. We believe that CIs offer an as yet undeveloped but potentially very valuable tool for psychologists to interpret their data (see e.g. Smith & Morris, in press). Any ban that involves throwing out the CI baby with the NHSTP bathwater should be avoided.

TIM SANDERS

Trafimow and Marks (2015) condemn CIs because, they say, 'A 95% confidence interval does not indicate that the parameter of interest has a 95% probability of being within the interval. Rather, it means merely that if an infinite number of samples were taken and confidence intervals computed, 95% of the confidence intervals would capture the population parameter.' It is true, as Cumming (2012) points out (p.79), that a 95 per cent confidence interval refers to the whole process of taking a sample and calculating a CI, 95 per cent of which will capture the population mean. However, it follows that the 95 per cent CIs that you calculate will most likely capture the population parameter.

The great value of CIs is that they provide valuable probabilistic information about the true location of the population mean. NHSTP deals with the normally uninteresting null hypothesis: the probability of the data if the difference or relationship is zero, or some other specific value. CIs help us conceptualise the plausible locations of the parameter (e.g. population mean or effect size), and the variability or precision of that estimate. As Smith and Morris (in press) point out, when we know both an effect size and its CI we can make a much more useful interpretation of the results of our research than when we have an effect size alone. We know of no alternative to standard errors in some form, such as CIs, for describing the likely variability in our effect size if we repeat our research. Given the relatively small sample sizes of much psychology research, the CIs of the effect sizes can be disconcertingly large and remind researchers that a simple effect size, or other point estimate, can suggest a precision that is not justified. Failure to report this variability does not make it go away but does expose those following up the research to dangers of misinterpretation.

Trafimow and Marks's (2015) solution to the banning of NHSTP and CIs is to require bigger sample sizes and the reporting of descriptive statistics with frequency and distributional data. In general, such information is welcome. However, the reason for the original development of NHSTP was that it is always necessary to decide whether or not to act in the future as if a real effect is likely. CIs of effect sizes give good guidance to such decisions, but it is not clear upon what evidence these fundamental decisions will be based if CIs and NHSTP are banned.

Another issue with demands for larger samples is that psychology researchers are inevitably faced with limitations through cost and time upon the number of participants that they can test. Resources devoted to doubling sample sizes for one study are not then available for new research questions. If the original sample size was, in fact, sufficient, there is a serious ethical and practical question of whether an unnecessary increase in sample sizes will do more harm than good to the future of psychology. How will one decide if the sample is large

enough? Given that the purpose of larger samples is to increase the precision of the estimates, reporting that precision should be required, rather than forbidden. Until there are alternative and generally accepted means of answering the question 'Could the effects have arisen by chance?', we recommend reporting CIs and, where researchers find them helpful, NHSTP.

Peter Morris, Catherine Fritz, Graham Smith, Amar Cherchar, Robin Crockett, Chris Roe, Roz Collings, Kimberley Hill, David Saunders, Martin Anderson and Lucy Atkinson
University of Northampton

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Trafimow, D. & Marks, M. (2015). (Editorial). *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 31*. doi:10.1080/01973533.2015.1012991

Editor's note: Graham Smith and Peter Morris's article 'Building confidence in confidence intervals' is scheduled to appear in *The Psychologist* in June.

I've recently read of the abolition of p-values by the journal *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* (BASP) (Woolston, 2015). Whilst there are clearly issues with the misrepresentation or misunderstanding of what p-values mean, it seems a little radical to eradicate them altogether. Unfortunately even within the intellectual arena where we are encouraged to apply more scope and think less in terms of black and white, there still exists a bivalent division of opinion on null hypothesis significance testing (NHST). The fact is that NHST is not a bivalent issue and therefore the energy expended on only arguing either way is wasted.

Contrary to that which is often implied – at least within the social sciences – the p-value doesn't exist as an instruction to accept or reject the null hypothesis, but rather advises us on how seriously to take the data that we have analysed. Yes, the p-value tells us how likely our data is to occur under the null hypothesis, but it is not statistically strong enough to stand as a lone witness to the alternative hypothesis – It stands or falls conditionally on associated variables (e.g. effect size, sample size). Elimination of the p-value from BASP is a prime example of bivalent, simplistic thinking. Although I feel that I'm merely stating the obvious here, would it not be far better to insist that articles must feature sampling statistics, effect sizes and confident intervals alongside p-values; moreover why not insist on a lower alpha value, say $< .01$?

A 'smear campaign' against the p-value implies that use of the statistic has been noted as problematic and the knee-jerk reaction is 'Let's get as far away from this as possible'. This isn't the logical, measured approach that we should expect from those we rely on to publish our studies and review our submissions, but more comparable to the spin-doctor response that is often so glaringly obvious within the political arena! Given that most brain-related research seems to suggest that the most efficient and powerful result is derived from a combination of several elements working together toward a common goal, it seems surprising that we have missed this analogic lesson when addressing our use of statistical analyses – why not argue for all ways, used together, correctly?

Lee Barber
University of Reading

Reference

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Increased training costs

I was appalled to learn recently that our Society has hugely increased fees for the Health Psychology Stage 2 qualification to a flat rate of £5995. Previously completing in two years cost £2421, three years cost £3154, and four years cost £3888. As the average completion time is three years, this represents a mean increase in fees of 90 per cent at a time when inflation rates are negligible. The service provided for this fee is minimal and consists of tasks such as ratification of training plans and arranging the examination. Trainees will still need to pay additional and considerable supervision costs.

I have been offered a range of explanations. These have included the fact that trainees have been previously encouraged to complete their training quickly to avoid annual fees; that fixed fees is the fairest approach; that fee rises ensure sustainability of qualifications, and that the BPS will now facilitate access to online journals and e-books via the University of London.

I have significant concerns about the decision of the Trustees. Most importantly, I feel the likely outcome is simply that fewer psychology graduates will pursue a career in applied psychology in those areas that do not receive public funding and where career opportunities are less certain post-qualification. This is hardly an ideal outcome for a charity that aims to promote and develop our profession.

The new cost will probably prove prohibitive to individuals and to organisations keen to pay fees, as £6K means creating trainee posts will become less attractive. For example, over the course of a two-year project the cost of an Agenda for Change band 6 trainee health psychologist with only seven hours of 8A workplace and coordinating supervision per month (in reality considerably more is provided) is about £76K. For an additional £4K an organisation could employ a full-time, qualified band 8A who would arrive with greater skills and considerable lower supervisory needs.

Moreover, at an individual level, a single fee will not reflect accrued costs and penalises people who complete more quickly. Whilst some may find it beneficial to have access to University of London resources, others can access their local university or alma mater either free of charge or for a small fee of about £30 per annum, and NHS employees have access to considerable library resources.

One of the most striking aspects of my communication with our organisation about this has been the lack of openness, transparency and lack of debate about such a fundamental issue. For example, I requested details about training costs and was informed that this is confidential information. This seems odd because one way or another, the Trustees represent the membership and this is hardly commercially sensitive information.

If as an organisation we subsidise anything, then my view is that it should be our early career colleagues, but instead we seem to be using them to generate resource.

Dr Andrew Keen
Consultant Health Psychologist
NHS Grampian

Jane Smith, BPS Director of Qualifications and Standards, replies: The move to a new, single-fee structure for the Society's suite of Stage 2 qualifications has been controversial. There are two related issues.

First, for many years our qualifications have been charged on a 'pay-as-you-go' basis, with candidates paying an enrolment fee,

an annual maintenance fee for each subsequent year on the programme, a fee each time they submitted work for assessment and a fee for any required reassessments. This meant that candidates never knew how much it would cost them to complete a qualification, especially as fees were revised each year in line with inflation. It also encouraged candidates to complete their training as quickly as possible to avoid paying annual fees. Indeed, there were examples of people wishing to submit for assessment but being unable to do so because of the associated costs. Unlike universities, we do not have a fixed 'course' length and we do not differentiate between full- and part-time students, as this is impossible to do with work-based learning programmes. A single, fixed fee with an open end date therefore seems the fairest approach to take.

Second, our fees policy has always been to ensure that the qualifications cover their costs. Over the years, with changes in the structure of our qualifications and in the number of candidates on each qualification (especially as the number of alternative programmes offered by universities has increased), it was no longer the case that each qualification was sustainable in its own right. When moving to the new structure, the fee for each qualification was calculated to ensure that it covered the full costs of delivery for that qualification. This has led to a re-balancing between qualifications and, in the case of Health Psychology, does mean that new candidates are paying more than they would have done under the previous system.

The Trustees explicitly considered the policy of requiring qualifications to be self-supporting. It decided that qualifications are offered as an individual member service and as such it would not be within the Society's charitable objective to subsidise them from other sources of income. However, for those candidates in difficult financial circumstances, the Society can – and does – offer significant discounts on its fees, taking individual circumstances into account. We have also ensured that candidates can spread the cost of the qualification over several years, to avoid the need for a large up-front payment.

The new structure is therefore designed to ensure that each qualification is sustainable and that the costs of completing a qualification are more transparent to candidates and employers at the point of enrolment. The new system will also be significantly less bureaucratic than the old, which required multiple invoices over the course of a candidate's enrolment. Freeing up staff time will allow us to focus on further improving the service we provide to candidates. We have made strides in recent years with the introduction of supervisor and candidate workshops, online forums for candidates and, more recently, a new service enabling candidates to access academic resources through the University of London's Senate House library, but there is much more we can and will do in the future.

Tattoo regret

Waiting with the herd of parents at the school gates, I overheard a discussion about painful and expensive tattoo removal. The conversation spread like a contagious therapy session, more wounded men and women came forward; and scars were being shared. It wasn't the first time I'd heard people in their thirties and forties discussing 'tattoo regret', an area that requires more investigation.

Tattoo removal may be a booming industry, yet so still is tattooing, particularly with under 25s. More young people than ever are having tattoos. Tattoo regret looks certain to rise in correlation.

Getting a tattoo that you later regret may just be part of being young. The prefrontal cortex, a part of the brain responsible for planning ahead and risk taking (Blakemore & Mills, 2014), is not fully developed until around 25-years-old, so behaviour later viewed as foolish or risky can be considered typical. And, of course, the influence of celebrity is significant on this age group; a tattoo offers the opportunity to mimic, to belong; therefore, become cool too. Young people are merely pursuing Carl Rogers' 'ideal self.'

I asked some of the parents for their reasons for removal. Some were thinking about the example to their children; others no longer liked tattoos and were fed up with covering up; some worried about perceptions of employers and colleagues; others were disappointed with the art they'd chosen, which had often dated. Fashion is impermanent; the idea of a fashionable tattoo is a paradox. Whether it be a dolphin on the shoulder, barbed wire around the triceps, or a full tattooed sleeve, either fashion or your own psyche moves on.

There seems to be more than a hint of self-dissatisfaction inspiring many tattoos. Statistically, people with tattoos are more likely to have self-harmed (Stirn & Hinz, 2008), often saying they had previously had a bad relationship with their body or that a tattoo was a way of getting over a negative event.

For those seeking attention tattoos certainly induce reaction, be it praise or disdain; drawing the eye to youthful skin, often erotic areas of the body. But is attracting attention, the same as being attractive? People with new tattoos report feeling more attractive, but what happens when the eyes are drawn to skin that is no longer youthful or to a body no longer in shape?

The blandest of walls and ugliest of buildings are more likely to be a magnet for graffiti than the chiselled ornate stone of an ancient church or temple. It is rare too for Mother Nature's designs to be attacked. Nobody thinks trees require added art. It is also rare to attack pets with a spray can; we seem happy with how evolution intended them. Yet our own bodies do not appear safe from artistic modification. Maybe when we fail to see any beauty or worth we feel the design could be improved.

For many people a tattoo is a youthful demonstration of self-expression that they stand by throughout their lives. For others, tattoo regret can be the symptom of psychological progress, as life experience develops identity and self-worth. Few events affect this more than becoming a parent. Perhaps this is the true age of tattoo regret.

Peter Sear
Theydon Bois, Essex

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Consciousness complexity

I should start by saying that I am extremely sympathetic to Jessica Bockler's view, as presented in her letter 'A misleading juxtaposition' (April 2015). There are many unnecessary lines being drawn in psychological research, and the most popular one made between the conscious and the unconscious is, on closer inspection, only feebly supported in empirical evidence. So, there may in fact be a touch of the *argumentum ad hominem* in Bockler's letter, for the following reasons.

I too have been arguing that the modern distinctions being drawn between conscious and unconscious mechanisms in the domain of reasoning, judgement, decision making, learning and problem solving reflect a false dichotomy (Osman, 2004, 2010, 2013, 2014). Not only does the distinction misrepresent the rich range of phenomena that psychologists study by boxing them into category X or Y, the dual-process framework that is built around it can only offer a neat and enormously broad classification system that describes differences, but not much more than that. This clearly is a limitation, since while theory is designed to offer descriptions and explanations – which dual-process frameworks do – crucially theory should generate new predictions –which dual-process frameworks struggle to do.

As to the empirical side of things, is there still a role for the unconscious in reasoning, judgement, decision making, learning and problem solving. What I have been arguing here is that we need to return to basics by considered the reliability and validity of the methods used to examine the unconscious in cognition. Thus far what we have is a considerable body of research that either fails to meet one or both of these essential empirical criteria for theory building (Osman 2004; 2010, 2013, 2014). In fact, the replication crisis in psychology indicates just how significant a problem we face in establishing our empirical foundations, particularly with regard to the involvement of the unconscious in our cognition.

This doesn't rule out a place for the unconscious or dual-process theories, only that as they are currently conceptualised, they fall short of standards the community has set. To end, yet again, in absolutely agreement with Bockler's view, what we do face is a dynamic and complex world, and the nature of our cognition is in turn complex and dynamic. The interplay between the environment we are in and how we act and react to it is where psychologists have often looked in order to best understand human behaviour (Osman, 2010, 2014). Throughout the history of psychology this is where the most significant advances in theory and practice have been made.

Magda Osman
Queen Mary University

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FORUM SURVIVAL GUIDE

Anyone who has a PhD will remember that first moment when someone addresses you as Dr. Although you have spent years of your life earning that doctorate, it comes as an initial shock. After a while, though, it becomes not only familiar but expected. Indeed, you may feel demoted if somebody refers to you as Ms or Mr. For many academics, the next moment of joyous transition is when you make it to the pinnacle of being called Professor.

Last year, Dr Tom Hartley of the University of York carried out a fascinating little survey of modes of academic address in e-mail (see https://thermaltoy.wordpress.com/2013/01/26/dr-who-or-professor-who-on-academic-email-etiquette/). This was initially stimulated by a discussion on Twitter about whether it was appropriate for a potential PhD applicant to start an e-mail to a UK Professor with 'Hey Rebecca!'. The general view was that it was not. Though I have to say it is better than 'Esteemed Madam Mrs Professor Dorothy', which was how one recent e-mail started. It is easy to laugh at these things, but the sad part is that the sender clearly has nobody to tell them about appropriate modes of address.

However, Tom's survey turned up another intriguing fact of which I had been unaware, concerning UK vs. US differences. It turns out that in the UK, once you are a Professor you expect that title to be used in formal communications. In the US, though, 'Professor' has the connotation that you are a student addressing a teacher, and the title 'Dr' is deemed more appropriate for a senior member of a university, recognising their academic qualification.

It is fascinating how much is bound up with this terminology. Until I read Tom's post, I had been puzzled when I got e-mails from the US, starting 'Dear Dr Bishop'. I tended to assume they just did not know my proper title. No doubt my e-mails in the other direction to 'Dr Professor X', had elicited similar bafflement at my crassness.

Gender can make these issues all the more complicated. One of Tom's respondents commented: 'I am happy with being called Ms, though it suggests a lack of research into my real title, but I get very annoyed at being called Miss or Mrs because it seems to me to be a form of disrespect for my hard won qualifications. In some cases, when done by men of a certain age, I suspect it is deliberate denigration, as if they cannot cope with the idea of a female full professor.'

This issue came to a head recently when people on Twitter noticed a piece in the *Wall Street Journal* (tinyurl.com/pm2uyoe) by Raymond Tallis reviewing books by Susan Greenfield and Norman Doidge. Susan Greenfield (who is Dr, Professor and Baroness) was referred to as 'Ms' Greenfield whereas Doidge (who is Dr and Professor) was referred to as Dr Doidge. People leapt upon Tallis, assuming he was being sexist. They should have noticed, though, that he himself (both a Dr and a Professor) was referred to in the piece as 'Mr Tallis'. Unfortunately, as he explained, it is a weird stylistic convention of the *Wall Street Journal* to restrict the title 'Dr' to MDs, so even a UK medic doesn't qualify.

I was irritated enough to write to the editor concerned to ask that they reconsider this convention. For anyone with a PhD to be referred to as Mr or Ms in an article seems to reflect at best ignorance in the writer, and at worst deliberate insult. This problem is compounded if titles are recognised for some individuals but not others. The response I got did not give me any optimism that the venerable *Wall Street Journal* will reconsider its policy; they seem to regard tradition as more important than clarity and avoidance of offence.

Dorothy Bishop is Professor of Developmental Neuropsychology and a Wellcome Principal Research Fellow at the Department of Experimental Psychology in Oxford. This column aims to prompt debate about surviving and thriving in academia and research.

FORUM SPORTING LIFE

Stumped by the big numbers

England's exit at the group stages of the recent Cricket World Cup has reopened speculation about the organisational aspects of effective teams. It has been mooted that playing for England in a climate of constant screening and data analysis places unsustainable demands on players and curbs individual flair. While it is difficult to comment on any particular team from the sidelines, the possible side-effects of micro-management in modern sport are worth exploring.

The pertinent question, given that the number of support staff in most professional sports teams has increased vastly in the last decade, is whether the merits of such an approach outweigh the potential issues. It is undeniable that the sport science era has greatly enhanced sport physiologically and technically; so why might players be disgruntled?

Increasing support staff (e.g. technical coaches, strength and conditioning experts, data-analysts) may be problematic for many reasons. As in all working environments, disagreement with management is the principal source of unhappiness. Put simply, the greater number of staff increases the likelihood of this. Secondly, needing to impress a wider circle of coaches can increase pressure on players. Apart from being observed more, it increases the number of professional interactions in a day and thus emotional labour. Thirdly, staff may compete for time and attention – which can frustrate players. Finally, repeated exposure to coaches can exaggerate the possible pitfalls present in all learning environments, namely, habituation or dependence.

It is often posited that discontent amongst athletes stems from the modern preoccupation with data. The concept, 'you can't manage it if you can't measure it' is as prevalent in sport as it is in the likes of business and education. Data *per se* is not a problem – athletes have always collected information about opponents (Jardine apparently studied footage of Bradman prior to the 'Bodyline' series in 1932). The issue is that, if not used skilfully, it can lead to a form of premeditation that contravenes the moment-by-moment decision making required in sport. Leadership in action (i.e. tactical flexibility in performance) is a facet of sport that must continue to be valued, or our athletes' development as people and performers will be stunted. A further issue regarding data usage relates to flow and peak performance. Literature suggests that such experiences are derived from joy, freedom of expression, and clarity (absence?) of thought. Data could certainly assist this clarity, but without care it might also obfuscate.

As part of support staff, psychologists must emphasise that athletes are not machines. Management that does not consider the wider psychological issues of mental fatigue, individual differences, flow and empowerment is fatally flawed. Athletes won't be stimulated by the environment and, in time, will be found wanting in competition.

Questions:

How has the sport psychologist's role at the elite level changed over the past decade due to the growing role of data analysts?

Have sport psychologists noticed a decrease in athlete enjoyment in the modern era due to increasing sport science demands?

Have psychologists felt pressured to produce data in such environments, where observation and interaction might be more effective?

Alastair Storie is a former professional cricketer and a Chartered Psychologist and runs the company Performer Consulting. Share your views on this and other sport psychology issues – e-mail psychologist@bps.org.uk.

What has neuroscience done for psychotherapy?

I want to thank Jon Roiser for demonstrating the promise that neuroscience holds for mental health practice ('What has neuroscience ever done for us?', April 2015). However, I feel that more could be said about what neuroscience offers psychotherapy given the large proportion of readership either personally or professionally involved in this.

Jon argued that in order to enhance the treatment of mental health problems, we need to understand the neural basis of symptoms. He referred to the neural circuits underlying symptoms as proximal mechanisms because they directly cause symptoms. At the other end of the spectrum, distal mechanisms, such as personality and upbringing, indirectly shape symptoms. This view is undoubtedly useful as it integrates neurobiological and psychosocial frameworks. However, by specifying the neural circuits underpinning symptoms, we remain at a descriptive level, which may not further psychotherapies.

What difference does it make knowing that fixated thinking and stereotyped actions are represented by cortico-basal ganglia circuits in obsessive-compulsive disorders? The target of exposure interventions remains the same. We thus need to go beyond the 'How' and ask 'Why?' Imagine a car breaking down due to over-revving. We could change the damaged parts of the engine (neural circuits) but we would neglect the underlying cause: the driver's over-revving habit (underlying emotional conflict).

So should mental health professionals still care about neuroscience? I argue that we can advance psychotherapy by understanding how the brain internalises distal mechanisms, particularly negative psychosocial experiences. Assuming that the consequent emotional conflicts underlie symptoms that are adaptations to these conflicts, can we reshape or even erase conflicts to ease a client's suffering? Bruce Ecker and colleagues claim to have achieved this by applying the principles of reconsolidation to psychotherapy.

Reconsolidation describes how consolidated, or stable, memories can be modified during their reactivation (Tronson & Taylor, 2007). By identifying and experiencing the implicit memory or conflict-driving symptoms and concurrently experiencing something that sharply contradicts the memory's expectations, we can overwrite the conflicting memory with an adaptive one (Ecker et al., 2012). Repeating this procedure is argued to deliver profound cessation of symptoms. Despite several laboratory studies in humans demonstrating the erasure of fear learning, clinical trials are needed to assess the validity and utility of this approach.

Of course, both the neural mechanisms that relate to symptoms and those that drive them need therapeutic intervention: residual proximal mechanisms may ignite newly developed conflicts. However, there is no reason why distal mechanisms are not represented by neural circuits, given that 'the brain is the interface at which genetic and environmental influences interact'.

Matthew Constantinou
University College London

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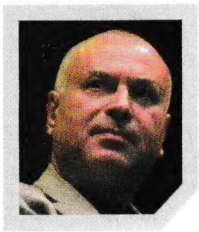
A straightforward interview

How refreshing to read the interview with Sergio Della Sala and his straightforward responses (April 2015). As a wannabe neuropsychologist I often come across references to, 'use it or you'll lose it' and comments such as 'listening to Mozart will improve cognitive functioning' in both my clinical work and social life when my area of work is revealed. Only the other day I gently disputed an article saved for me from one of the Sunday papers. I don't pretend to have an in-depth knowledge of neuroscience and the workings of the brain, but Della Sala helpfully reminded that it is, of course, complex and 'discussions about the functioning of the mind [can't be] reduced to slogans or simplistic concepts'.



My favourite part of the interview was the assertion that 'playing computer games…won't do us any better than seeing friends, enjoying a walk or doing crosswords' – indeed, one of my most effective clinical interventions was giving a former acquired brain-injury patient permission to stop daily brain-training practice! This game, prescribed by a well-meaning case manager, had been increasing her anxiety and providing a stark daily dose of failure, neither of which was conducive to her rehabilitation.

Dr Hayley Entwistle
Principal Clinical Psychologist
Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

NOTICEBOARD

I am a postgraduate student at Coventry University and am currently completing my empirical research for my MSc. In order to do this I need to recruit participants to engage in the study. My research aims to understand the experience of **psychologists who are employed as expert witnesses** in terms of how they feel they are viewed as a source of evidence. The study would involve a telephone interview. If you are interested in taking part, please contact me.

Nicola Maguire
maguiren@uni.coventry.ac.uk

EDUCATIONAL IMBALANCE

As educational psychology trainers in Newcastle, we have noticed over the years that there is a significant demographic imbalance in our applicants and in those who undertake the programme. This is shown most starkly for us in the preponderance of white females among those interviewed and entering the programme and then the profession. We are intrigued and somewhat puzzled as to why this is so, and wonder if any demographic imbalance has been noted elsewhere across the discipline.

We would be interested to hear of others' experience and thoughts on the matter – is it a concern for others?

Billy Peters, Dave Lumsdon, Richard Parker, Simon Gibbs and Richard Parker
Programme Team
Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology
Newcastle University

Autism confusion

I am confused by two recent letters (April 2015) about the importance or otherwise of an autism diagnosis. Both Professor Rita Jordan (also Letters, February 2015) and Dr Waseem Alladin seem to agree that service provision should be based on individual need, a view substantially similar to that expressed by Graham Collins (Letters, December 2014 and March 2015), with whom both nevertheless take issue. Dr Alladin also argues that a diagnosis is an important precursor to treatment planning. In contrast, Professor Jordan states that 'diagnosis is a poor determiner of services'. So what exactly does an autism diagnosis add?

Both evidently agree that complex social deficits are distinctive of autism. Dr Alladin also cites DSM-5 as a diagnostic guide. However, DSM-5 specifies two possible and distinct diagnoses in this context – 'autism spectrum disorder' and 'social-communication disorder'. The DSM is explicit about the difference: the individual must also display restricted or repetitive behaviours or interests to justify an ASD diagnosis: so apparently this is what is really distinct about autism. Either complex social deficits are *not* uniquely characteristic of autism or the DSM has got it wrong.

However, Professor Jordan questions the reliance by diagnostic systems on behavioural symptoms, arguing that we should somehow go beyond these in considering autism. But how could we devise a reliable diagnostic system without using behavioural indicators? How else could we ever agree about the unique social deficits of autism, or even whether there are any?

Yet diagnosis apparently does matter. I know from my own clinical experience that valuable support services may be reserved for children with a formal diagnosis, while others with equal needs often miss out. There will inevitably be pressure, often from parents, for clinicians to assign diagnoses for a condition with no determinate biomarkers. One can ask whether it is right that services be allocated this way, particularly when it seems so difficult to specify what exactly constitutes the unique features of autism. Whilst it may be commendable for advocacy groups to campaign for dedicated services, this has surely contributed to widening the boundaries of autism and the so-called 'autism epidemic'. This perhaps exemplifies Hacking's (2015) argument that activists have even shaped our *understanding* of autism. Where *is* the difference between having autism and having a diagnosis of autism?

Dr Richard Hassall CPsychol
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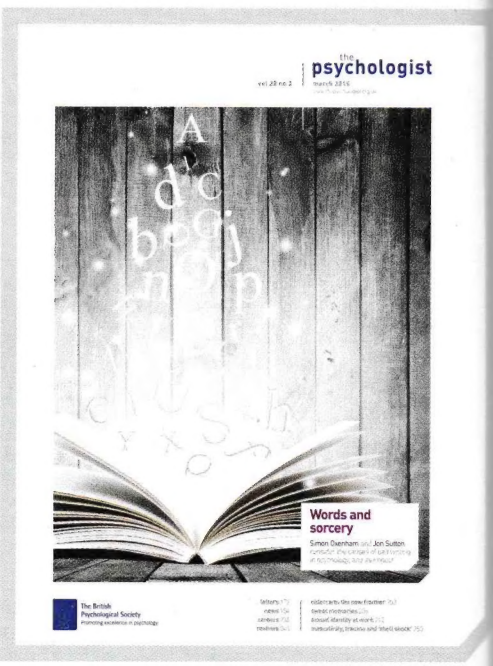
Reference

Hacking, I. (2015). On the ratio of science to activism in the shaping of autism. In K.S.Kendler & J. Parnas (Eds.) *Philosophical issues in psychiatry III*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sorcery with words



I have read with much interest the article 'Words and sorcery' by Simon Oxenham and Jon Sutton (March 2015). I believe that writing is a talent and for those who need to learn how to do it, the process is long, tough and made up of several trails and exercises. As an undergraduate student, the aim of our essays, lab reports and coursework is generally to convey a clear, concise, coherent message about a certain topic with a critical point of view. It is also important to explain the main concepts through the use of an accurate style and to define jargon and psychology terms as well.

The suggestions and tips that I have read in Oxenham and Sutton's article are extremely useful, and I have noticed some similarities with what our professors taught us – taking time to construct your work, thorough researching references that may help us to better understand the topic we have to write about, and building a logic and objective argument. Sometimes, even reading badly written articles might be an effective technique to understand what we, as students, have to avoid doing.

Here, I would like to share some articles and books that I find fascinating and wonderfully written.

It is hard to choose only few papers among all those that have been published in these years, and therefore I have selected my own favourites. The article 'The construction of autobiographical memories in the self-memory system' by Conway and Pleydell-Pearce in *Psychological Review* (2000) is a brilliant work; Loftus and Palmer's 1974 study in the *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behaviour* 'Reconstruction of automobile destruction: An example of the interaction between language and memory' about false memories and how they can be formed is fascinating, and

I remember I enjoyed reading it when I had to do a lab report related to this concept; then, Kapur et al.'s 2005 paper

prize crossword no 81

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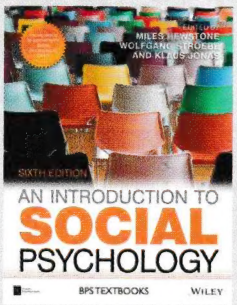

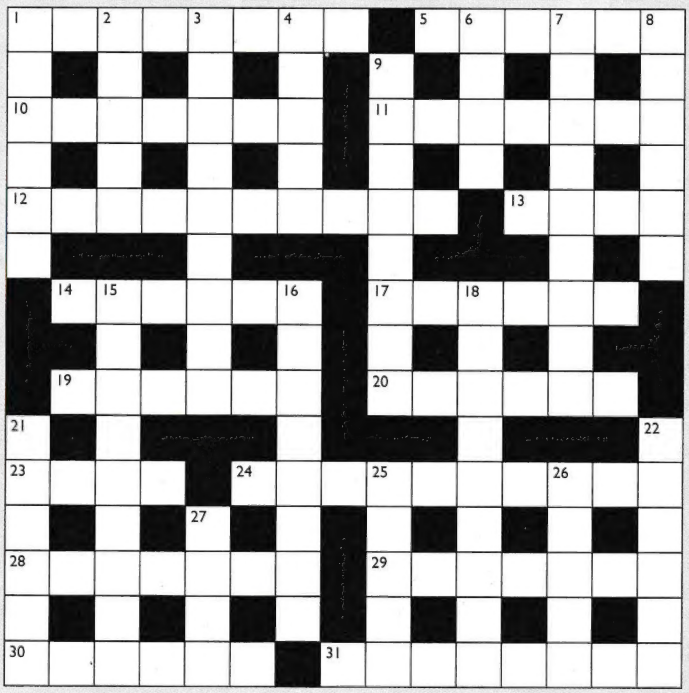

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Send your entry (photocopies accepted) marked 'prize crossword', to the Leicester office (see inside front cover)
deadline 8 June 2015. Winner of prize crossword no 80 L. Hearn, London

no 80 solution **Across** 1 Reflex reserve, 8 Often, 9 Ape, 10 Tense, 12 Croquette, 13 Pluto, 14 Mayfair, 15 Tempest, 17 Raiment, 20 Burette, 22 Zloty, 24 Appealing, 25 Roald, 26 Lei, 27 Irish, 28 De Clerembault. **Down** 2 Entropy, 3 Lingulate, 4 X factor, 5 Element, 6 Estop, 7 Venture, 8 Occam's razor, 11 Ego strength, 16 Margarita, 18 Isolate, 19 Trailer, 20 Baptism, 21 Trivial, 23 Yodel.

in *Schizophrenia Research* 'From dopamine to salience to psychosis – linked biology, pharmacology and phenomenology of psychosis' is in my own opinion a hallmark in the schizophrenia research field – it is written in such a way that the major complex concepts are clearly explained and can be understood also by non-professional individuals.

Finally, in terms of books, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (1985) and *Musicophilia* (2007) by Oliver Sack are both masterpieces that I would recommend to everyone. Sacks's books are a journey into the fragile human mind, and through his style he enables the reader to understand the processes and implications underlying neurological and clinical disorders in a clear, engaging and touching way.

Sarah Pisani
Psychology undergraduate
City University London

Thank you for including my response alongside the three other responses (April 2015) to your article 'Words and sorcery' (March 2015). I particularly enjoyed the response from James Hartley, especially when I discovered that my response's Flesch count (46.3) was within a smidgeon of his (47.8). Will you warn future contributors 'Under 30 not admitted'?

A further thought: What a pity you did not quote the opening paragraph of Karl Wiggins's poetry collection *Words Are Our Sorcery* (2014):

'Words are the writer's sorcery, our dark arts and our sleight of hand. They're our enchantment and our temptation. Words flow around my brain, pulsating and swimming, knocking into one another until I can finally ambush them and leak them out onto the page. This, believe it or not, is how I write. Sometimes I overindulge myself and it gets out of hand, but that's how I like it, it's how I've ghosted some of my best creations.'

Is this what you had in mind when you wrote the title? Would you accept the 'ghosted creations' of we mere psychologists?

Joshua Fox
Hailsham, East Sussex

Editor Jon Sutton, co-author of the article, replies: I wish I could say that link was deliberate, but I wasn't aware of that piece! Instead, I chose the headline based on my desire for a painfully extended metaphor about fantasy lands, and for the anagram of 'sword' as in 'sword and sorcery'. The point in the article about falling on barren land is apt, given that even the Assistant Editor didn't pick up on that until about a month after publication.

across

1 Capone's endlessly insane kept at prison (8)
5 Drink by quiet river in Syrian city (6)
10 Work without match official in clover (7)
11 Altered dimension of glue solution with colourful coat (7)
12 Psychiatrist's censure recorded for plastic film (6,4)
13 Slight mumble (4)
14 Measuring instrument limited one's occupation (6)
17 Owing popular girl who's coming out on time (2,4)
19 Confront back street aspects (6)
20 Host of stars at charity event meeting unknowns (6)
23 Crazy to take drug with alcoholic drink (4)
24 Arranged in rows and columns as a clean slate (6,4)
28 Forgetting that's been broadcast in cinemas (7)
29 Primary sign (7)
30 Sailors recline back to descend by rope (6)
31 Overwhelm one sister on romantic engagement (8)

down

1 Ought, say, to take one's medication at first for developmental disorder (6)
2 Encourage church, always poetically (5)
3 Psychologist's side irritant over embankment, say (9)
4 Softly lit with silver and blue (5)
6 Shine after religious teaching's eradicated sin (4)
7 Throw fight as part of 3's experiments (6,3)
8 Arranges to follow marching? (6)
9 Doctor, for example, admits a short time having night vision (8)
15 With unease, gal transplanted shrub (9)
16 Look again at study (8)
18 Spotted canine wagging a tail? Damn! (9)
21 Almost run through a graceful creature (6)
22 Surety that is secured by Scottish magistrate (6)
25 NUS, say, in college briefly - working (5)
26 Largely savage inner self, to Jung (5)
27 Hastily bottles wine (4)

IS SCIENCE BROKEN?

A lively debate was held at London's Senate House in March with panellists from neuroscience and psychology discussing the question: is science broken? If so, how can we fix it?

The discussion covered the replication crisis along with areas of concern regarding statistics and larger, more general problems. The session began by considering the pre-registration of studies, with Chris Chambers (Cardiff University) explaining the potential. The standard system, whereby an academic completes research then submits their findings to a journal, can lead to several types of bias, he said. As one member of a very large team who had been contributing to the development of registered reports in journals including *Cortex*, Chambers said the first question he asks of audiences is this: If your aim is to do good science, what part of a scientific study should be beyond your control? 'The answer you typically get is results,' Chambers reported. The next question is: In the interests of advancing your career what part of a study do you think is most important for publishing in high-impact journals? 'Again, it's the results.'

This leads Chambers to conclude: 'The incentives that drive science and individual scientists are in opposition, and I think if we're going to tackle this issue we should recognise the incentive problem we have.' Chambers said this incentive issue can lead to publication biases within journals, significance chasing, hypothesising after results are known, or changing hypotheses to fit results. He also said there was no incentive to share data, that the whole field was encumbered by a lack of statistical power. In the current incentive structure it makes more sense to publish large numbers of acceptable papers rather than a small number that are based on studies with large samples and high power. In addition, Chambers said, academics often do not see replication as worthy of their time.

Chambers suggested that authors could adopt a philosophy where what gives hypothesis testing its scientific value is the importance of the question being asked and the quality of the methodology, not the results it produces. He then went on to explain the process of registered reports. In this structure authors submit a stage one manuscript including an introduction, proposed methods and detailed analysis, and pilot data of possible. This article then goes to a stage one peer review where reviewers address whether the hypotheses are well-founded, the methods and analysis feasible and detailed enough that someone else could reproduce the experiment directly. Is it a well-powered study with quality controls and manipulation tests included? If these requirements are met the journal offers in-principle acceptance, regardless of the study outcome.

Authors then do the research and submit a stage two manuscript that includes the introduction and method from the original submission, results separated into two sections (the analyses mentioned in first manuscript, plus any extra analyses the authors came up with after the provisional acceptance), and a discussion. This goes to stage two review and if the authors followed the pre-approved protocol, and have conclusions justified by data, the manuscript will be published.

Chambers then discussed 25 questions he is often asked about registered reports. These included the common concern of how does one know if registered reports are suitable for a given field. He said any area where at least part is involved with deductive hypothesis-driven research can potentially benefit if any problems exist such as publishing bias, significance chasing, post-hoc hypothesising, low power, lack of replication and data sharing. Although not all of these problems are solved by pre-registration, Chambers feels it can be helpful to incentivise transparent practices across a number of different areas.

Following a break each of the panellists gave a brief talk around the central debate. Dorothy Bishop, Professor of Developmental Neuropsychology at the University of Oxford, said she believed that science was broken, but had hope that it could be fixed. Professor Bishop said science has more of a problem than it had in the past. Now, she said, we are able to gather huge multivariate data sets and perform complicated statistics on them. She added: 'It really comes down to the problem being that you have people presenting exploratory analyses as if they were hypothesis testing… I started to realise what a big issue this was when I realised I wasn't believing a lot of literature I was reading.'

Bishop said her concerns began while looking into conducting EEG research. While reading the literature she realised the amount of potential measurements one can take from EEG or ERP data. 'I saw there was so much flexibility anyone who did anything with this method would find something.' The use of four-way analysis of variance particularly concerned her and as a result she carried out several ANOVAs on a large set of random numbers and found several apparent 'effects'.

She said she was amazed to find that virtually 75 per cent of the runs she performed on her data would come up with some effect. Bishop added: 'In analysis of variance you are controlling for the number of levels at any one factor, but you're not adjusting for the number of comparisons you are doing… If I made an *a priori* prediction that there was going to be a group-by-task interaction only once in all of those 15 runs would I get a false positive. But if you're not predicting in advance and hypothesising after looking at the data you're

going to find something that looks like an effect.'

Neuroskeptic, a neuroscience, psychology and psychiatry researcher and blogger, gave a personal perspective on problems with science, speaking of the events that led him to lose faith in the research in the field. He said that as undergraduate students people are taught to do statistics in a very particular way, but once a person begins PhD research things change vastly. After gathering some results for his PhD research, Neuroskeptic found he had one significant result out of seven tasks performed by his participants. He said: 'I thought back to my undergraduate days and thought "What if you do a Bonferroni correction across all the tasks?". I got the idea that I'd suggest this to my supervisor but don't think I ever did, I realised that just wasn't how it was done. I was very surprised by this. I learned as an undergraduate you do a Bonferroni correction if you have multiple tasks. I started to wonder if we aren't doing this who else isn't doing it? I began to lose faith in research in the field.'

Neuroskeptic said he wondered whether there was a good reason that multiple comparisons correction was not used. He added: 'I still don't think there's a good reason we can't do that. We have come to the tacit decision to accept methods which we would never teach undergraduates were a statistically good idea, but we decide that we're happy to do them ourselves. That's how I got on the road to blogging about these issues.'

Sophie Scott, Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience (University College London), gave a more general discussion about how people become involved in science and the legacy left by scientists. Scott said that she did not believe that scientific change or progress was something you see with one or two papers. She said that it was useful and humbling to consider where one's own research would be in 100 years. She said it was useful to move away from thinking about processing single papers and look at some of the bigger issues. She added: 'Some of the assumptions we make in psychology are horrific. We all have unconscious biases, but what we could do is look at how that's influencing the science we do. Because it is, whether you think it is or not.'

Scott said that scientists tend to look at a scientific issue or question within a framework of what can be studied. 'If I look into the study of language, most of the research is on reading written words, there's less on listening to speech because that's hard, there's less on speech production and least of all on writing because that's even harder.' On whether science was broken, she concluded: 'I think it's interesting to answer these questions, but I'd be concerned if we focused too much on process, because that leads to you focusing on individual papers... the bigger picture will tell you where things are going. Rather than focusing on what's wrong and what's right, look at what's going to last and what's meaningful.'

Sam Schwarzkopf, Research Fellow in Experimental Psychology (University College London), bucked the trend of the event by suggesting that science was working better than ever before. He said in the history of science there had always been irreproducible results, political obstacles, other academics scooping ideas and publication bias. Dr Schwarzkopf said we should be focusing on science that gives equal weight to exploration and replication. He said that all the talk about pre-registration and replication looks at the symptoms rather than the root cause. He concluded: 'Science is a process that's constantly evolving and it's better than it ever has been, it's more open and more transparent, and there are ways of communicating science which weren't even around 10 years ago. That doesn't mean science is perfect – we should be asking how can we make science even better than it is.' ER

BIG BANG SCIENCE FAIR

As tens of thousands of children and teenagers flooded into Birmingham's NEC for the Big Bang science fair, the British Psychological Society and representatives from several universities were on hand to inspire an interest in psychology. The Society's Mind Mysteries stand amazed the youngsters with its live demonstrations.

The University of Nottingham were among the guests at the stand, and Roger Newport was causing gasps and shrieks among willing participants using his specially designed equipment that distorts how people perceive their own bodies. Volunteers place their hands beneath a monitor screen that seems to give the person an image of their hands on the table, but using a delay in the visual feedback given to the person and subtle psychological manipulation Dr Newport can make it seem as if a person's finger is being stretched or as if one of their hands has disappeared entirely.

He said: 'The machine helps us to show people how they know what shape their body is, it demonstrates that the body they perceive to have is made up of sensory inputs, and this shows how these are all put together. The reactions are mixed, it ranges from squealing to hysterical laughter, most people describe it as "weird". But in quite a few children it really prompts discussion from how it works to the psychological theory behind it.'

Kevin Silber was also demonstrating visual perception experiments, on behalf of the University of Derby. Using prism goggles Dr Silber showed how difficult it is to use inverted visual information to trace around drawings or even write your own name.

Students from the University of Leicester, along with lecturer Dr Caren Frosch, were demonstrating a physical illusion. Volunteers were given a large object and asked to choose one of a number of smaller objects that weighed the same, usually underestimating the weight. Frosch said this was caused by an illusion that bigger things are perceived as heavier, thus most people choose a smaller matching object thinking it weighed about the same. They also demonstrated optical illusions including an explanation of 'the dress' illusion, which exploded on social media after people perceived the same picture of the same dress as either being blue and black or white and gold.

Warwick University PhD student Zorana Zupan was demonstrating the galvanic skin response and pulse rate to show that psychological reactions also have physical manifestations. As well as electrodermal activity Zupan was measuring heart rate, further explaining how psychology can be measured in an objective way. She said: 'So far the children have been really interested in what we're doing. We're also showing people a diagram of the brain and explaining the functions of the various different regions, which has fascinated a lot of the people here.'

BPS Psychology Education Policy Advisor Kelly Auty said the Big Bang fair was a great opportunity for the Society to give young people and their teachers and families a hands-on experience of psychology. 'Many people think they know what psychology is and are really surprised when they come to the stand to find out about psychological phenomena and how they might be used in real-life research. This year, we also took part in the Maths Counts initiative, explaining why numeracy is important for psychologists. It has been a great experience, and our volunteers have all stepped up in making sure visitors to the stand come away with a really positive experience of psychology, have learnt a bit of psychological science and have had a great time.' ER

The Germanwings crash

On 24 March Germanwings Flight 9525 crashed into the French Alps, instantly killing all 150 passengers and crew. As it was revealed that co-pilot Andreas Lubitz caused the crash intentionally after locking his fellow pilot out of the cockpit, mental health issues quickly took centre stage. Tabloid newspapers reacted with brash headlines full of blame and bile, suggesting a causal link between depression and being a danger to the lives of others. 'Why on earth was he allowed to fly?', asked the front page of the *Daily Mail*. But in amongst the heat and intolerance, was there any light and genuine insight to be found?

Despite an increasing public discussion around mental health and stigma, a large-scale disaster still seems to bring out the ugly side of the media, with the complexities of mental illness glossed over. A candid column published in *The Guardian* (tinyurl.com/ohhpu7u) by novelist and journalist Matt Haig outlines examples of this stigma as well as his own struggles with depression. He points to several tabloid newspapers who jumped the gun in linking depression with violence and murder – before the full facts were even available. He wrote: 'Even when it did emerge that Lubitz had a history of depression and had been to see a doctor, does this mean all people with depression are an automatic risk to public safety? You'd think so, given some of the media output that followed.'

Haig makes the point that outlandish headlines from certain newspapers create a culture of silence, in which people feel a need to hide their illnesses. He added: 'For instance, imagine if you were a pilot who was suddenly suffering a bout of depression and you wanted to explain this to your employers and ask for some time off to recover. I imagine that such an admission would be harder to make today than it would have been before this press coverage.'

As mentioned by Haig, some tabloid newspapers made the suggestion that depressed pilots should not be allowed to fly at all. In an interview with the *Observer* (tinyurl.com/otduwk2) Professor Simon Wessely (President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists) pointed out that pilots with acute depression are not, in fact, allowed to fly. The report states that pilots are allowed to fly for commercial airlines a minimum of four weeks after symptoms of depression have been resolved or when they are free of symptoms but taking approved antidepressants.

Professor Wessely told the newspaper that he had dealt with pilots who suffered with depression, that once recovered they are still monitored, and that two of those he worked with went on to have very successful careers. He continued: 'Why should they not? What does cause trouble is saying that if you have ever had a history of depression then you should not be allowed to do whatever. That is wrong, as much as saying that people with a history of broken arms shouldn't be allowed to do something.'

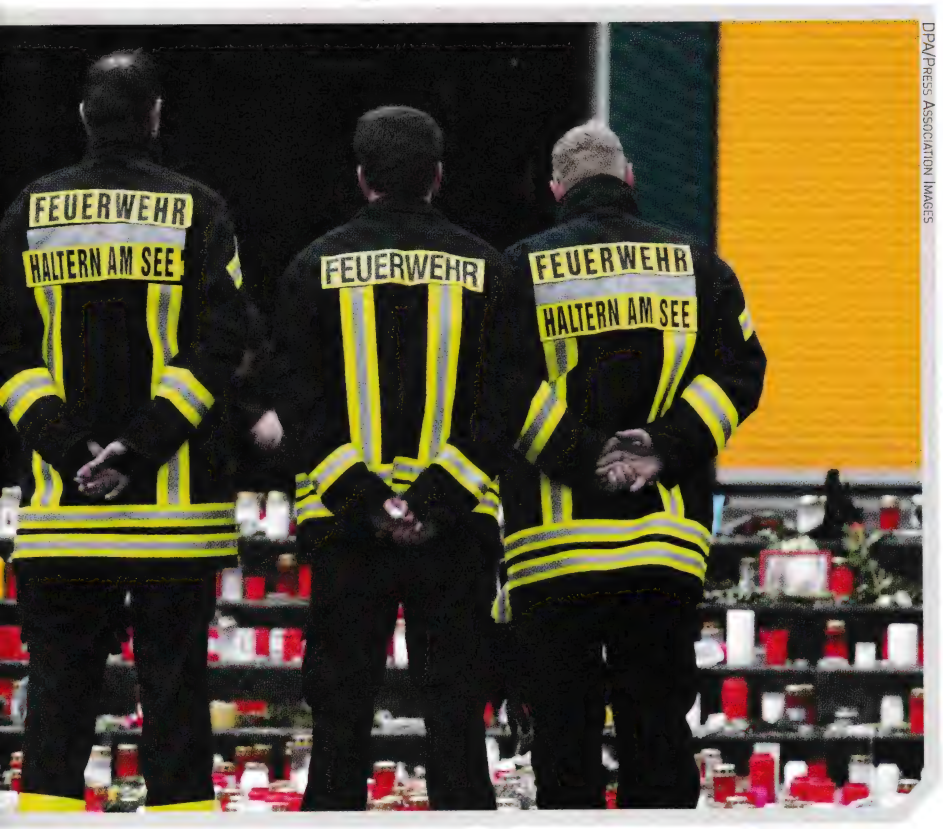
He added: 'We are all concerned. There are two reasons why: there isn't a link between depression and aggressive suicide, if that is what this is. There isn't normally such a link. And second, because of some of the ridiculous things that are said. Piers Morgan said that it was a disgrace that a man with acute depression was allowed to fly. Well, they are not allowed to fly. There may have been some fault in the procedures that let this happen, but they are not allowed to fly.'

Ruby Wax, the TV personality who has psychotherapy and counselling training, also added her voice to anti-stigma commentators. Wax, who has spoken openly about her own depression, wrote in the *Huffington Post* (tinyurl.com/obz2h68) that she had been on Sydney's version of *Question Time*, *Q and A*, and was asked whether all pilots should be examined for mental illness. She wrote: 'That's a question that could bring the stigma right back into fashion to the point of burning us at the stake again.' Wax went on to criticise the relative lack of research into cures for mental illness compared with physical illness.

Chartered Psychologist Professor Robert Bor (see tinyurl.com/prebwej), told *The Psychologist* that in his 25 years in the aviation sector he had become familiar with the mental health issues that affect pilots, as well as being involved with pilot selections and mental health assessments. Bor said a question that would be on all of our minds was whether such an event could have been prevented. 'Theoretically, yes, if every pilot was subjected to an extensive psychological assessment. But of course the real answer is no, because it is inconceivable that such assessments could ever be undertaken on a mass scale.'

Professor Bor said that regulatory authorities would now closely address the immediate antecedents to pilots behaving in destructive ways through acting on suicidal and homicidal thoughts. He added: 'The regulatory authorities will probably increase psychological testing for air crew, although it is unlikely that this will help to identify those at risk of unusual and extreme acts of violence. But these measures, as every therapist will understand, will not help us to access and understand the psyche of a pilot and most especially one who is committed to acts of such destruction.' In hindsight, he added, it was doubtful that this outcome could have been predicted: 'Regulatory authorities will come to terms with something many of us have always known: there are individuals who wrestle with destructive forces in their minds and some – thankfully very few – have access to jobs and responsibilities that can wreak havoc unless they are identified and selected out of their roles, or at the very least helped to manage their destructive urges.'

It was striking how little of the coverage dealt with this pertinent issue – murder-suicide. One article that did was by Erica Goode in the *New York Times* (tinyurl.com/m96farl). She wrote that 'studies over the last decades have begun to piece together characteristics that many who carry out such violence seem to share, among them a towering narcissism, a strong sense of grievance and a desire for infamy'. Adam Lankford, an associate professor of criminal justice at the University of Alabama, commented that in his research on mass killers who also took their own lives, he has found 'a significant



DPA/Press Association Images

number of cases where they mention a desire for fame, glory or attention as a motive'. Depression is not the key: 'People want an easily graspable handle to help understand this, to blame something or scapegoat,' commented Dr James L. Knoll, Director of Forensic Psychiatry at the State University of New York Upstate Medical University.

To zero in on depression is 'a low-yield dead end,' he said, adding, 'There's something fundamentally different here, aside and apart from the depression, and that's where we need to look.'

The *New York Times* piece goes on to discuss a study of aircraft suicides by Dr Hatters Friedman and Dr Chris Kenedi, a psychiatrist at Duke. 'Not all of them had a history of mental illness,' Dr Hatters Friedman said of the pilots. 'What keeps coming up is family stresses, relationship stress, work stresses, financial stresses.' In several cases, Goode notes, 'the pilots, all men, seemed to be acting on grievances.'

The British Psychological Society released a statement in the aftermath of the crash (tinyurl.com/o4aprfd), with President Elect Professor Jamie Hacker Hughes, referring to the calls for psychological testing and monitoring of pilots following the crash. He added: 'Many people associated with the industry have said that lessons need to be learned and, of course, this could help the bereaved families feel that steps are being taken to prevent these types of rare incidents happening in the future. The British Psychological Society is ready and willing to participate in any of those discussions to give expert support as appropriate. For example, helping to consider whether a greater focus on psychological testing and psychological wellbeing is desirable.'

Professor Dorothy Miell, President of the Society, added to this statement by asking that the debate in the media not add to the stigma surrounding mental health problems by making assumptions about the risks posed by those who experience depression. Will those who write the headlines listen, or will the next human disaster bring the same regrettable focus? ER

SUSTAINABLE MENTAL HEALTH PROVISION

A new report published by the Royal College of Psychiatrists claims a sustainable approach to health care can provide an answer to some of the current challenges in mental health. The authors outline how climate change could affect mental health services, and make recommendations for building more sustainable mental health services in the NHS.

The *Sustainability in Psychiatry* report (http://tinyurl.com/ojaaytp) suggests that, although the World Health Organization has recognised climate change to be the greatest threat to human health this century, healthcare services have been slow to recognise this. It also points out that the NHS is the single largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the UK public sector with a carbon footprint of 25 million tonnes in 2012 (the most recent data); and as buildings and direct energy-use only account for 17 per cent, reducing this will mean a significant change in clinical practices.

A sustainable mental healthcare system, the report says, will still need to provide high-value care in spite of environmental, economic and social constraints. It sets out the aims of such a healthcare system – to prevent mental illness, empower patients, staff and carers to manage their mental health, eliminate wasteful activity and make use of low-carbon alternatives.

Dr Daniel Maughan, the lead author of the report and Royal College of Psychiatrists Sustainability Fellow, said a change in culture and practice was needed. He added: 'Sustainable psychiatrists need to develop a further role of stewardship, not only of the resources they are using but of the NHS as a whole and the effects that the NHS has at large. Reducing over-medication, adopting a recovery approach, exploiting the therapeutic value of natural settings and nurturing support networks can all improve patient care while reducing economic and environmental costs.'

Produced with the support of the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare, the report lays the foundation for developing sustainable practices in mental health in the UK and suggests every psychiatrist should review the sustainability of their clinical practice. Among its recommendations the report suggests that psychiatrists could use video assessments, use public transport when carrying out home assessments and ensure only necessary medications are supplied to patients to avoid wastage. ER

Is breast best for intelligence?

A longitudinal study in Brazil hit the headlines recently with its findings on the positive impact of breastfeeding on cognition. But what was the real message of the research, particularly for the quarter of mothers do not attempt to breastfeed?

The study, published in *The Lancet* (tinyurl.com/m4rkfka), followed almost 3500 babies from 1982, from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. In Brazil there is no social pattern for breastfeeding – mothers from all backgrounds are equally likely to breastfeed. The researchers – led by Professor Cesar Victora – found that, compared with those who were breastfed for less than one month, those who were breastfed for 12 months or more had higher IQ, more years of education and higher monthly incomes.

If these results are correct, women who do not intend to breastfeed should perhaps be encouraged to try, not only because of the health benefits associated with breastfeeding but also for the potential cognitive benefit and impact on life outcomes. So how can psychology help mothers through the (often demanding) process of breastfeeding, and were the conclusions drawn justified in any case?

Health psychology researcher Ellinor Olander, Lecturer in Maternal and Child Health at City University London, said that breastfeeding education can have an effect on initiation of breastfeeding. She explained: 'This evidence comes from a, now somewhat old, Cochrane review, and the education described includes formal and informal sessions, needs-based or one-to-one support. It is also clear from health psychology literature that breastfeeding intention and attitude towards breastfeeding can also predict the actual behaviour shortly after birth.'

Dr Olander went on to say this leads to the question of why some women do not intend to initiate breastfeeding. 'This seems to depend on who they are, for example the issue of embarrassment can be an important factor for why adolescent mothers do not intend to breastfeed, while research has shown for Bangladeshi women living in East London, cultural factors played an important role in breastfeeding initiation.' Olander said occasionally things can happen that sway women away from initiating breastfeeding: 'A recent example from Scotland is where obese women report that due to birth complications such as caesarean section they struggled with breastfeeding, commenting that they could not remember their first breastfeed,' she said.

But what can health professionals do to encourage women to try to breastfeed? 'I think we have to ensure all women intend to attempt breastfeeding,' Olander said. 'For this, midwives play a key role. They need to promote the advantages of breastfeeding, but also understand the women's individual circumstances to provide woman-centred care, as well as show women how to breastfeed. That said, this assumes midwives and maternity support workers have time and feel they are able to care for women in a compassionate manner, which is not always the case, as evidenced by a very recent London study by Hunter, Magill-Cuerden and McCourt.'

Postdoctoral Fellow in Cognitive Ageing at the University of Edinburgh, Dr Stuart Ritchie, spoke about the study as a whole. He told us that intelligence was strongly heritable, and any study that attempts to look at parental effects on intelligence should control for this. He added: 'To get around this problem, you can do one of two things; control for parental levels of intelligence, or compare siblings or twins within the same family to control for genetics. The authors of this study didn't do either of these things in the paper, so we can't know whether or not the apparent effect of breastfeeding on intelligence is just due to smarter parents tending to breastfeed more, for whatever reason.'

Ritchie pointed to other studies that have used the correct controls and found no effect of breastfeeding, or at most a very small one. He concluded: 'There might be two arguments against my point above. First, the study does control for parental education, which we know is linked to parental intelligence. But the problem is we know they're not exactly the same thing (and only correlate moderately). Second, there isn't a socioeconomic gradient of breastfeeding in Brazil like there is in the US or the UK: that is, richer parents don't tend to breastfeed any more or less. But again, parental socioeconomic status is only moderately correlated with parental intelligence, so without that crucial control for parental intelligence, we simply can't draw any conclusions about whether breastfeeding has any effect.'

So, the jury is still out on whether breastfeeding has an effect on intelligence. As Dr Ritchie concluded: '...with this study design, we can't really know.' ER

Neuroscientist Dr Kris De Meyer (King's College London) and filmmaker Sheila Marshall are putting the finishing touches to *Right Between Your Ears*, a documentary about how we can become convinced that we are right, even when we are completely wrong.

In the spirit of social psychologist Leon Festinger's classic study in cognitive dissonance, De Meyer and Marshall spent six weeks in the US with a group of 'end-time believers' before, during and after their failed prophecy. The film weaves personal stories together with interviews with experts, including social psychologists Professor Elliot Aronson and Dr Carol Tavris (University of California, Santa Cruz) and neuroscientists Professor Mark Cohen and Dr Pamela Douglas (University of California, Los Angeles).

De Meyer said: 'Psychology has much to say about the nature of our convictions, and how we cope with the consequences of our actions. Yet it has fascinated me for a long time how little impact this knowledge has on resolving our increasingly polarised public debates and conflicts. Working with filmmaker Sheila Marshall stimulated me to step out of a purely academic role, and to try to engage a wider audience with these psychological insights.'

In addition to the personal accounts and academic contributions, one of the believers also takes part in an fMRI study about belief. De Meyer said: 'Together these perspectives give a unique insight into the nature of belief, and turn it from a story about "them" and "their" beliefs into a story of how we believe.' **ER**

| A crowdfunding campaign to cover the final part of the post-production costs, with the opportunity to preorder the DVD, is running until 21 May 2015. To find out more about the campaign and to watch the trailer of the film visit www.rightbetween.com.

Social psychology leading the way

A psychology journal has become the first in any area of science to exclusively publish pre-registered papers, or registered reports. *Comprehensive Results in Social Psychology* is now accepting its first submissions.

Instead of the usual post-experiment and results submission, authors submit their research proposals to the journal, which are reviewed and accepted on the basis of its 'substantive contribution and proposed methodology'. All accepted papers will then be published, regardless of results, as long as studies are conducted and results analysed as agreed in the pre-registered proposal.

Articles which are accepted for publication this year will be available to download for free online throughout the course of 2015 and print publication of the journal will begin in 2016. **ER**

| For more information on submitting papers to the journal visit tinyurl.com/k8motat

GOODBYE HEADCLUTCHER

Mental health charities Rethink and Mind have released a new set of free stock images to be used to illustrate mental health stories in the media. The groups' Get the Picture campaign is aiming to sway news outlets away from using so-called headclutcher pictures which show people sitting alone, head in hands. The say that such photos further stigmatise mental illness and lead to stereotypes about those suffering with mental health problems. They asked 2000 of their supporters for their views and 80 per cent said that headclutcher pictures do not show how it feels to have a mental health problem.

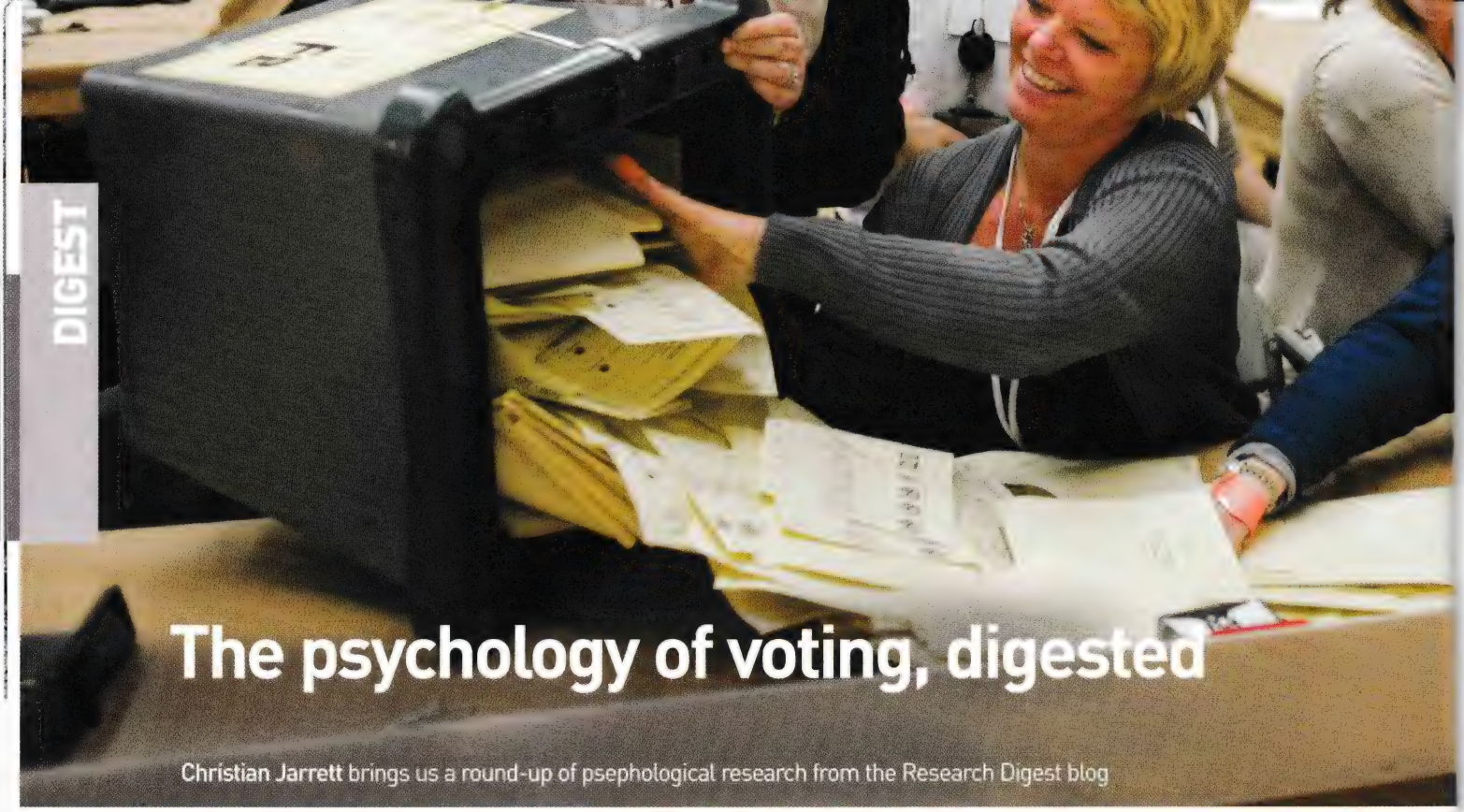
For more information and to download the pictures visit tinyurl.com/qjqlwus

BURNING MAN

A University of Oxford psychologist has been given a two-year grant to prosocial experiences' at the annual Burning Man festival, held in the Nevada desert. Molly Crockett has been awarded the grant by the Templeton Foundation. Her project is associated with the Experience Project, a $4.8m three-year initiative at the University of Notre Dame and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. The project explores the nature and philosophical implications of lived experiences that transform our epistemic perspectives.

KING'S FUNDING

The Higher Education Funding Council for England has pledged £10m towards a hub for Neuropsychiatry Imaging Research and Therapeutics at the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience at King's College London. King's is among seven institutions to receive funding totalling £100m. The money will fund equipment that will be used in advancing therapies for patients with neurological and psychiatric disorders.



The psychology of voting, digested

Christian Jarrett brings us a round-up of psephological research from the Research Digest blog

The UK General Election is upon us and the political parties are doing all they can to attract our votes. Psychology tells us that not only are the parties competing with each other, they also have to contend with the foibles of human nature. Many of us like to think that we vote according to sound reason, perhaps for the good of the country, our own family's best interests, or by selecting the most fair and competent candidate. In fact, there's evidence that our votes are frequently influenced by more superficial factors, from a candidate's looks to the weather on election day. Here we digest the psychology of psephology, running down the evidence for 10 factors that affect people's behaviour in the ballot box.

Candidate appearance

It would be reassuring to think that the electorate choose who to vote for based on the candidates' track records and future policy promises. In truth, many of us are swayed simply by the way that politicians look. Consider a 2009 study, led by John Antonakis and published in *Science*, that asked Swiss students to look at multiple pairs of unfamiliar French political candidates and in each case to select the one who looked most competent. Most of the time, the candidate selected by students as looking the most competent was also the one who'd had real-life electoral success, the implication being that voters too had been swayed by the candidates' appearance (there's little evidence that appearance and competence actually correlate). Unsurprisingly, being attractive also helps win votes (see Niclas Berggren's 2010 study 'The looks of a winner'), especially in war time (see the 2012 study led by Anthony Little: in peace time, looking trustworthy is more of an advantage). Other researchers, such as Casey Klofstad and Cara Tigue, have found that we're more likely to vote for male and female candidates with deeper voices. Meanwhile, according to a study by Beth Miller and Jennifer Lundgren, obesity is a disadvantage for female candidates, but may help male candidates. And Gabriel Lenz and Chappell Lawson's paper 'Looking the part' found that people ignorant about politics are more swayed by politicians' appearance, especially if the politician has had plenty of TV exposure.

Candidate personality

Journalists are often criticised for focusing overly on politicians' personalities rather than the 'real issues' – in the current election campaign, just look at the media commentary on opposition leader Ed Miliband. Psychology research suggests candidates' perceived traits are relevant, at least in the sense that they are related to the way we vote. A study from 2007 by Gian Caprara and colleagues found that we tend to vote for politicians who we think have similar personalities to ourselves – for instance, prior to the 2004 US presidential election, people who thought John Kerry shared their traits were more likely to vote for him in the election, whereas people who thought they were like George W. Bush tended to vote in his favour. A similar effect has been found in the context of Italian and Spanish politics (research led by Michele Vecchione). Meanwhile, in a study published last year by Markus Koppensteiner and Pia Stephan, students said they would be more willing to vote for politicians whom they considered to be more open-minded, friendly and emotionally stable (the politicians' extraversion and conscientiousness were not related to the students' voting intentions).

The polling station

A growing body of evidence suggests that the places we go to vote, influence the way we vote. For example, in 2008, US researchers Jonah Berger, Marc Meredith and S. Christian Wheeler reported that people who voted at a polling station housed in a school were more likely to back a bill proposing more funding for

The material in this section is taken from the Society's **Research Digest** blog, and is written by its editor **Dr Christian Jarrett**.

Visit the blog for full coverage including references and links, additional current reports, an archive, comment, our brand new podcast, and more. You can also subscribe to the free fortnightly e-mail, friend, follow and more.

www.bps.org.uk/digest

education; and a 2010 study by Abraham Rutchick found voting in a church (rather than school or other location) boosted support for a conservative candidate. Sometimes these priming effects are less predictable: a study published last year by Ben Pryor and colleagues at Oklahoma State University found that voters at a polling station in a church were more likely to support the introduction of same-sex marriage: possibly the religious symbolism reminded them that the arguments against such marriages are faith-based, which only served to increase their support for the proposal. There's even evidence that an uneven flooring could affect us: in research by Daniel Oppenheimer and Thomas Trail at Princeton University, people leaning to the left (because of missing wheels on a chair) were found to be more sympathetic towards left-wing political attitudes (and vice versa if a wheel was missing on the right). A similar finding was obtained more recently by Katinka Dijkstra and colleagues using a wonky Wii balance board. A somewhat related and intriguing line of research, led by Alan Gerber at Yale University, finds that many people suspect their ballot choice is not truly secret and this influences them to vote according social pressures, such as to conform with their declared affiliations.

Rain and sunshine

Evidence from the USA, Spain and the Netherlands suggests that for each extra inch of rainfall on voting day, turnout reduces by around one per cent. Conversely, sunny weather and higher temperatures increase turnout (but not in Sweden where poor weather made no difference to turnout). There are also some more intriguing meteorological effects on voting. For instance, based on evidence that people's attitudes towards climate change are influenced by the local weather (higher temperatures increase belief in man-made global warming), the UK's Green Party might wish for a heat wave to strike at election time. Yet, in Alexander Cohen's paper 'The photosynthetic President: Converting sunshine into popularity', local sunshine was also found to increase approval ratings for US President George W. Bush when he was in office, so perhaps Prime Minister Cameron would also benefit from a sunny spell. But consider too how poor weather affects people's risk aversion. A study presented in 2013 by Anna Bassi showed that people are less likely to vote for risky candidates when the weather is poor. A key feature of this General Election is said to be the rise of minor parties and untested candidates. Perhaps the major parties should start their rain dances?

Shark attacks, sports and storms

Following a dramatic series of shark attacks in New Jersey in 1916, voters punished the incumbent President Woodrow Wilson (according to an analysis published in 2012 by Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels). This is just one example of how the electorate tends to blame governing parties for unwelcome events, even if those events are beyond the politicians' control.

The converse is that incumbent politicians gain from positive circumstances. For instance, a 2010 US study led by Andrew Healy found that the incumbent President benefited from extra votes in districts that had enjoyed football and basketball wins in the days leading up to an election.

Of course, the effects of uncontrollable events are not always predictable and may depend on how politicians are seen to respond. When Hurricane Sandy struck in the days before the 2012 presidential election, this apparently increased local votes for the incumbent, President Obama (see Yamil Velez and David Martin's paper, 'Sandy the Rainmaker: The electoral impact of a super storm').

Daughters and sisters

How we vote could depend on the gender of our children. That's according to a longitudinal analysis of British citizens published in 2010 by Andrew Oswald (University of Warwick) and Nattavudh Powdthavee (University of York) – after having a daughter, people's political attitudes were more likely to swing to the left, and vice versa after having a son. The researchers think this happens because having a daughter increases awareness of issues facing women, such as pay discrimination, and increases sympathy for the typically greater desire among women for investment in public services. Note this is a contentious area: a Europe-wide study by Byungkyu Lee and Dalton Conley published last year failed to replicate this finding, while a US study by Dalton Conley and Emily Rauscher found daughters increased parents' support for the (right-wing) Republican party.

Of course, parents also influence their children's political persuasions: there's evidence from Crystal D. Oberle at Texas State University that sons are affected by both parents, but daughters only by their mothers. The effects of parents on children's voting is both sociocultural and genetic. We're also influenced by our siblings, especially our elder siblings. Just as the British analysis showed daughters increase parents' left-wing sympathies, a 2011 US study from Iowa State University found that so too does having an older sister.

Scandals

An analysis by Andrew Eggers and Alexander Fisher of the last UK General Election in 2010 found that voters punished candidates who'd been found out by the expenses scandal – but the effect was modest and less than expected. A study of local Spanish politics, led by Elena Costas-Pérez, also found that voters punished politicians caught up in corruption scandals, but the extent depended on media coverage and whether charges were brought. According to research led by Yosef Bhatti, voters' responses to scandals tends to be highly partisan – that is, we're lenient when the transgressing politician is from the party we support (and vice versa). Timing is important: a study from last year by Dona-Gene Mitchell of the University of Nebraska found that scandals that break later in an election campaign may be less harmful because voters have acquired policy information by then. A drip, drip of new scandal information sustains its damaging effects. The grammar used in reports also makes a difference: the imperfect tense 'was fiddling his expenses' is more damaging than 'fiddled' (found Caitlin Fausey and Teenie Matlock). Some commentators warn that political scandals distract us from real issues, but a 2010 study by Beth Miller at the University of

Missouri-Kansas City found that when a politician is caught up in a scandal, this actually improves our memory for their policies – this is consistent with an associative memory account, in which the salience of the scandal boosts our memory for other information related to the politician.

Voter emotions

When we're feeling happy with life, we're more likely to vote for the ruling party, so says an analysis by Federica Liberini from 2014 which controlled for the influence people's economic circumstances. A lab study led by Michael Parker (and one from Nicholas Valentino and colleagues) found that when we're angry we pay less attention to details about candidates; when we're fearful, by contrast, we scrutinise information more carefully, arguably making us more informed voters (but see Jonathan McDonald Ladd and Gabriel S. Lenz's 'Does anxiety improve voters' decision making?' for a critique). Israeli research (by Anna Getmansky and Thomas Zeitzoff) finds that living in fear of rocket attacks increases people's support for right-wing parties (although note, there's evidence from José G. Montalvo that terrorist attacks in Madrid increased support for the country's opposition left-wing party in the election that came days later). Meanwhile, research from Gordon Hodson and Kimberly Costello shows that people who are more prone to disgust (for example, they dislike sitting on a bus seat left warm by a stranger) are more likely to hold right-wing conservative views.

Negative campaigns

Political parties spend enormous amounts on advertising: a 2011 study led by Alan Gerber on television ads found the effects on voting preferences to be strong, but short-lived. Ads with moody music and lighting are more effective (according to research by Ted Brader at the University of Michigan). What about negative campaigns? In the current UK General Election campaign, the incumbent Tory defence secretary recently made an attack on the character of the leader of the opposition and was widely criticised for doing so. This largely fits the findings from Luciana Carraro and colleagues' 2010 lab study on negative campaigns – politicians who made negative statements about their opponents suffered a backlash, while the target of the attack was unaffected. It's worth noting though that

LINK FEAST

Why Some People Have Trouble Telling Left From Right (and Why It's So Important)
tinyurl.com/p2u7rsv
'A significant proportion of our population has difficulty in telling right from left,' says Gerard Gormley, including, worryingly, medical students (The Conversation).

Rethinking the Brain
tinyurl.com/nhhmsr8
The Human Brain Project's aim to simulate the entire human brain is unrealistic – one of the conclusions of a damning report (coverage from *Nature*).

What Spending a Year in Space Does to Your Mind
tinyurl.com/pspqzxk
'It's stressful, but transcendental too,' says Francie Diep at *Pacific Standard*.

The Psychology of the Executioner
tinyurl.com/nbewe4c
A look inside the minds of those who have participated in firing squads and lethal injections.

Does Sport Make Us Happy?
www.bbc.co.uk/sport/0/31963832
It can do, if you keep your expectations in check, says the BBC's chief sports writer Tom Fordyce.

How Teenage Brains Are Different
tinyurl.com/ohlwmj7
Useful summary of the science and its legal implications, from *The Economist*.

based on voters' subconscious attitudes, the target of the attack did suffer a loss in standing (as did the politician making the attack). A 2007 meta-analysis by Richard Lau's team found that negative campaigns don't adversely affect voter turnout, but they do reduce trust in politics and lower public mood. A recent study from Jörg Matthes and Franziska Marquart at the University of Vienna recently found that watching adverts that are congruent with our political beliefs makes us more likely to vote; watching an ad that clashes with our views has little effect.

'It's the economy, stupid' ...

...this apparently was Bill Clinton's campaign mantra back in the 1990s. With the British economy showing signs of recovery, today's incumbent Tory party will be hoping that Bill Clinton was correct – that ultimately, if the economy is doing well, people will reward the ruling party. However, research from Ron Johnston and his colleagues at Bristol University suggests that this is not the case: for example, non-Tory voters who were financially comfortable at the time of the 1997 General Election did not reward the incumbent Tory party at that time by switching allegiance (and ditto in 2001 when previously non-Labour supporters in a good financial position failed to switch to voting Labour).

These results might be explained in part by most people's partisanship (and 'motivated reasoning') – when things go well under our preferred party, we credit the party, but if things go well under a party we oppose, then we don't. That said, there is evidence that sudden increases in people's personal wealth does influence their voting tendencies – winning the lottery makes it more likely that people will vote Republican, says a US study by Erik Peterson, and a UK one from Powdthavee and Oswald, and more likely that they'll support this incumbent party, says Spanish research led by Manuel Bagues. A UK paper by Andrew Aitken found that as housing prices increase (to the benefit of home owners, in terms of the wealth they have invested in their property), so too do intentions to vote for the Tory party.

I For a fully referenced and hyperlinked version of this piece, see http://digest.bps.org.uk/2015/04/the-psychology-of-voting-digested.html. There you will find a daily blog featuring the latest research, a 10-year archive, our new podcast and much more. Follow the Research Digest on Twitter @ResearchDigest, or find us on Facebook, Google+, Tumblr and more.

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Scientists who score higher on trait conscientiousness, and those who are competitive, are more likely to conduct 'deep research' within a specialist domain. By contrast, those more motivated by learning than achievement are disposed towards interdisciplinary research. The finding comes from an analysis of scientists involved in diabetes research. *PNAS*

Psychologists have used a classic magic trick to study the illusion of free choice. Participants were 'forced' to pick a specific card via a riffling technique that only allowed enough time to view one card. Despite their choice being constrained in this way, most participants felt they'd chosen freely and many confabulated reasons for why they'd made the choice they did. *Consciousness and Cognition*

Team performance is disproportionately influenced by the behaviour of the group's stand-out member, or what researcher Ning Li calls the 'extra-miler'. The only time this isn't the case is if other team members don't have contact with the extra-miler. *Journal of Applied Psychology*

Modern psychology textbooks tend to provide even more biased reports of Asch's seminal studies into conformity and dissent than older textbooks. The books provide plenty of stats on conformity but rarely mention the proportion of participants who consistently dissented from majority opinion. *Teaching of Psychology*

In-depth interviews with professionals from a range of industries have revealed just how important it is for employees to be able to personalise their workspaces. Doing so serves a number of functions, including fostering shared identity with colleagues and advertising one's traits, such as trustworthiness. *Academy of Management Journal*

People can tell the difference between object descriptions written by someone from memory and those written from their imagination. However, researchers aren't sure what cues people use to make this distinction. The 40 dimensions they looked at revealed few differences between imagined and recalled accounts. *Memory*

Different mental abilities peak at different times of life. After analysing large numbers of people's performance online, researchers report, for example, that the ability to recognise emotional facial expressions peaks between the ages of 40 to 60, whereas visual working memory peaks at 25. The findings counter the idea that cognition declines inexorably from an early age. *Psychological Science*

FEATURE

Back to the ballot box

Our journalist **Ella Rhodes** meets researchers in psychology and politics in search of answers to voter apathy

When most people think of a healthy democracy they imagine, in Abraham Lincoln's phrase, a government 'of the people, by the people, for the people'. But that is only possible if the people get involved, and right now, it seems, more and more of us are sick and tired of politics. On the eve of every general election we hear murmurs about voter apathy, and this time around they seem to have grown louder. Comedian-turned-revolutionary Russell Brand, who was placed fourth in *Prospect*'s list of the world's most prominent thinkers, recently declared politics as 'dead'.

The problem of low turnout in elections is an international one, with the US mid-term elections in 2014 witnessing what has been called 'the least representative election in modern American history' (tinyurl.com/obejjwv). And not only has turnout declined over recent years, it's also becoming increasingly unequal as younger and less affluent citizens remove themselves from the electoral process (tinyurl.com/ofhssjj). Yet political engagement *is* possible: consider the 85 per cent turnout in the Scottish independence referendum, a figure so high that it led the Russian authorities to make accusations of 'North Korean' style irregularities!

In the UK, MPs have endorsed proposals from the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee, aimed at bringing us to the ballot box. These include making the day of each general election a national holiday, automatic registration, and trials of voting on the internet. But are these merely sticking plasters for our ailing democracy? Can psychology get at the underlying causes of engagement – or disengagement – with politics? I spoke to several psychologists and political scientists for a variety of perspectives on these questions.

From the global to the personal

Perhaps the main thing pushing people towards the polling station is the prospect of effecting real change in an area of significance to them (although this could be as much something that affects a group with which they identify or their family as something which impacts them personally). This could explain the high turnout in the Scottish referendum, and the large numbers who swept the 'anti-austerity' party to power in Greece. And this prospect may diminish as our personal worlds expand.

Social psychologist Professor Steve Reicher (University of St Andrews) points to large-scale structural processes that may have contributed to a disillusionment with politics. 'Globalisation, the rising power of international corporations and of transnational bodies like the EC gives a growing sense that politicians can no longer affect the things which govern our lives. The end of the Soviet Union, the narrowing of ideological alternatives, and the feeling that all politicians are the same (and generally not in a good way) has increased the perception that "they are all as bad as each other", and that electoral choice is therefore illusory.'

What can politicians do about this? Reicher refers to the use of symbolic politics in order to make oneself seem distinctive: the Labour Party targets the non-doms to position themselves as the party of 'working people' against the rich; the Conservatives target inheritance tax to position themselves as the party of aspirational workers against welfare dependants. But at the same time, Reicher stresses, both parties are, if anything, even more afraid of seeming distinctive. 'So the Labour Party use their manifesto launch to emphasise that they won't tax or borrow more and the Conservatives use theirs to make pledges on childcare and the NHS,' says Reicher. 'In this era of political cross-dressing, to cite the BBC's Nick Robinson, it gets harder and harder to tell political parties apart. It gets easier and easier to see all politicians as a single category – and, what is more, a category that is neither "of the people" nor "for the people".'

Trust between citizens and politicians

This illusion of choice and the shape-shifting tactics used by political parties may go some way towards explaining why politics and politicians are seen in strikingly negative terms. Across Europe in general, only 24 per cent of people say they trust their national government and only 14 per cent say they trust political parties. Not surprisingly, things are particularly bleak in the crisis-hit countries. In Spain, for instance, the figures are 11 per cent and 8 per cent respectively. But things are not much better in the UK where 31 per cent trust the national government, and 20 per cent trust political parties (figures from Eurobarometer 2013/14).

Some, even MPs themselves, lay the blame for this squarely at the door of individual politicians. Speaking to *The Guardian* (see tinyurl.com/mkyqc23), Green Party MP Caroline Lucas said Nick Clegg's reversal on tuition fees is

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Political engagement is possible: consider the 85 per cent turnout in the Scottish independence referendum

responsible for much of the cynicism about British politics today. 'What I can't forgive is that it was always difficult as an MP to say, "Trust me", but you can't say it at all now.'

I asked trust researcher Dr Nicole Gillespie (University of Queensland) why Clegg in particular appears 'tainted'. She pointed out that 'education fees are a very deep-rooted and important issue to much of the British public.' According to the research, this question – Do politicians adhere to values and principles important to the trustor? – relates to Integrity, one of the three key dimensions people assess trustworthiness on. The others are Benevolence (Do they have genuine care and concern for their constituency?), and Competence (Do they have the knowledge, skills and abilities to competently perform their role?). Gillespie said: 'Distrust in politicians frequently stems from a perceived lack of integrity, particularly not following through on pre-election promises, and distrust in government typically stems from the perception that they are unable to deliver to expectation. Over-promising and under-delivering is a guaranteed way to erode the trust and confidence of the public. Politicians need to better manage the public's expectations about what they can and can't deliver.'

Gillespie added that people and leaders can recover from a broken promise if there's an external cause or uncontrollable change that has led to the breaking of that promise. However, in a study following the UK MP expenses scandal, Dr Gillespie and her colleagues were surprised to find that of the 478 MPs that had an expense-related allegation against them, less than 5 per cent acknowledged their transgression and apologised for it. This is despite the fact that 66 per cent of MPs with allegations had subsequent published evidence indicating guilt. Rather, the majority of MPs responded with justifications and denials (56 per cent and 49 per cent, respectively). This is troubling from a trust perspective, says Dr Gillespie, and is likely to be a key factor in voter apathy.

Gillespie also points out that in the age of the internet and globalisation, mistakes become known quickly and widely, and the failures of politicians have more currency than the good news stories. 'So politicians feel more nervous about what they say and might come across as evasive. It's challenging for politicians to maintain a broad base of trust given some of these changes to politics. They may also feel they are not free to say what they believe or stand for because of pressure to maintain the party line.'

A psychoanalytic approach

There may be another reason why 'over-promising and under-delivering' is particularly damaging to political engagement. Political theorist Professor James Martin (Goldsmiths, University of London) uses psychoanalytical ideas in his research into political speech, and he argues that 'Political behaviour is often not very rational at all – what grips us instinctively may be any number of things that speak to an unacknowledged sense of hurt or anger, loss or potential fulfilment.' Engagement becomes an expression of an individual's sense of self and their subconscious desires. 'Sometimes people don't explicitly know why they believe what they do, they feel it as a gut instinct, it "calls" to them and they respond by identifying.'

"politics and politicians are seen in strikingly negative terms"

Professor Martin believes that as older identifications with political parties subside, we find we simply cannot tell, as commentators and analysts, what might happen in elections: '...the public's dissatisfaction at politics does not supply an obvious location for investment but rather, many. We tend to think it a sign of trouble that we can't predict what will happen in an election. But in many ways this is simply a truth about our own psyches – it is not automatic what it is that will grab our attention and call up our allegiance.'

Martin also pointed to issues that cause anger and hostility in leading people to engage with politics. He said: 'Hostility to immigration, for example, is a persistent, unresolved sore in British culture that gathers around it a surprising amount of anger and prejudice that

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certainly motivates people to come out onto the streets and to validate all sorts of hostile political argument. The important point here, however, is less the merits of the issue and how it might practically be resolved than what grievances are invested in it, how some people manage to hook their desires, their fears and aspirations, in this rather than in anything else.'

Has the immigration question become, in Freud's terminology, a fixation? 'It is a symptom that substitutes for all sorts of desires and disappointments,' Professor Martin says, 'not least the failing of established politics to evenly spread wealth and opportunity. It serves as a point of emotional eruption to activate people's sense of grievance, not simply as a genuine problem awaiting solution. So in some ways, it is the failure to shift political ground that leads to some issues becoming sources of motivation and stimulants to participation.'

'It has become carnivalesque'

Not all are convinced that appealing to the hopes and fears of individuals is the most constructive way to hook people into politics. The media is so often the driving force behind a party's success at a general election, but could the personalised, piecemeal approach of mainstream news programmes and newspapers actually be detrimental to engagement?

James Moir, a sociologist and member of the International Society for Political Psychology (Abertay University), argues that there is a widely held view, largely disseminated through the media, that voters should have opinions about political matters, or indeed the political process itself (Moir, 2010). Dr Moir says: 'This individualises the political process and reduces it to a matter of intra-psychic cognitions and perceptions rather than dealing with "big" ideological issues. Basically what I have argued is that we are surveyed and opinion polled out, so to speak… "big" politics has given way to a minutia of issue-by-issue concerns – a little like a shopping basket approach. The media are saturating us with this and so to my thinking it is no wonder that it has become carnivalesque and something of a turn-off for many.'

In his other work (Moir 2013a, 2013b), Moir focuses on the idea of political communication as performance, echoing Marshall McLuhan's famous saying 'the medium is the message'. He points to a research tradition that has examined performative aspects such as the use of metaphors, three-part lists, intonation of voice, and so on. News websites and the use of Twitter or YouTube videos by politicians creates a new arena of performance for politician, one in which there is a blend of both the formal and informal. Does it work? 'Well, that's the question,' says Moir. 'It did for Obama in his two presidential campaigns, where his Twitter machine went into overdrive and where he was able to connect with younger voters. This sense of being in touch with politicians and the idea of their human, authentic side is now much more of an issue – the politics of personality in a new guise over, yet again, actual political commitment. Having said this, the recent referendum in Scotland showed that it is possible to engage the public in "big" political debate, but of course this was a big one-off issue. Will performance win out again in the forthcoming general election?'

The outsider

Some politicians find this performance easier than others. In particular, those who initially appear to be the underdogs of the political world often go on to capture the attention of large swathes of the population. Consider the oppositional views of Russell Brand, or the burgeoning popularity of UKIP's Nigel Farage (for an analysis of UKIP's rise, see Robert Ford and Matthew Goodwin's *Revolt on the Right*).

Politics researcher Tereza Capelos (University of Surrey) points me to a study in the US that found people hated Congress but tended to love congressmen. She said people tend to have a negative relationship with the political system as a whole, thinking it impenetrable or inconsequential. 'But if you delve a little deeper you find these people aren't that cynical, but that cynicism is the norm. So anyone who can portray themselves as an outsider to the political system has a benefit because they don't have that stain of all that negative general stuff that goes with being an in-the-system politician.' (Consider Nigel Farage's approach in the televised leaders' debate: 'I warned you at the beginning, they are all the same. They don't understand the thoughts and aspirations of ordinary people.')

Capelos said there was another psychological system at play in these cases. Once a political party has been in government for a while, the honeymoon

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Does the voting process itself impact upon political engagement? See also our Research Digest round-up on the psychology of politics on pp.354–357

period of hope and election promises is over and people start to become critical of the party's record in delivering policy. 'Governments after their first term never score as highly on opinion polls as when they're elected. When a party becomes incumbent it gets negative flak from voters and usually loses voters, the opposition get more voters, that's why democracy works.' In the run-up to an election, 'outsiders can rely on that distant hope… they don't have expertise or a demonstrated ability, they can portray themselves as they wish. Anyone who comes in as an outsider doesn't have the stain of the political system that so many people feel negatively about.'

Outsiders may look to draw attention to that stain, to play on the negative emotions of the electorate. But Capelos warns that although 'negative sells', at the same time it makes people disengage politically: 'They feel alienated and that they've had enough of politics. Media portrayals of politics and politicians which are more edgy and negative can alienate the electorate in the long run but in some environments it can inspire political movements, such as the use of social media in the various political uprisings in the Middle East.'

Charles Clarke, British Labour politician and Visiting Professor of Politics at the University of East Anglia

'Campaigning, working in local politics, it's all driven by the same thing, to try and improve the society and world in which they live. There are a very small number of people who do it because they want to gain a certain status in society, but I think that's very much an exception.

'If people see a government that's frozen or unable to act in actually improving the world, and see problems existing that the political structure doesn't really address properly, they lose confidence in the idea that politics can make a change. The more you're able to bring people into your confidence – to explain what the problems are, what you're trying to do, where you've failed and where you haven't – the more genuine that exchange is, the more people have confidence.

'In my experience working at the University of East Anglia, many young people are deeply interested in politics. I don't think it's true that young people are intrinsically less interested in politics and the welfare of society, it's that politics doesn't always make itself easily accessible to them.'

An inconsequential illusion of participation?

This use of social media, blending the formal and informal, is a relatively new arena for politics. This year in February the networking giant Facebook reminded its users to register to vote, potentially reaching out to millions of young people throughout the UK. But with an estimated 1 million people dropping off the electoral roll over the past year, many of them young people and students, does social media engagement translate to actual votes and political action?

Political psychologist Rodolfo Leyva (Middlesex University) says the literature on social media and political engagement gives a polarised view on the topic. The more optimistic side claims that social media, including blogging, content sharing and social networking, are helping to reverse inequalities observed in voting participation. 'These studies suggest that social media are enabling a greater number of people to be exposed to more political information and to actively participate in political discussions, which is leading to a rise in formal political and civic engagement. This is shown in the 2013 study by Towner and another in the same year by Zhang [et al.], that the effect is particularly seen among young people and working-class participants, who are generally disengaged from the electoral process.'

On the opposing side, some studies suggest that social media only helps to increase benign online political engagement, such as clicking 'Like' on a Facebook post. Leyva adds: 'A study last year by Lewis and colleagues on the impact of Facebook on online mobilisation and commitment to the Save Darfur cause, which at its height listed 1.2 million members, found that Facebook created an inconsequential illusion of active political participation that quickly diffused. In other words, in this case, Facebook did not function as an effective tool for generating dedicated and sustained political engagement even at the online level.'

Leyva admits that this more sceptical and critical literature is 'rife with the same theoretical, conceptual and methodological limitations as its optimistic twin – for example, non-representative samples, rigid and simplistic conceptions of political engagement, and/or reliance on self-reported measures'. But she concludes that she does share the concern 'that social media may be socialising and habituating emerging adults into forgoing meaningful offline political engagement in favour of relatively banal online political actions'.

An even bigger worry is that online, people can modify their user settings to only read stories that confirm and conform to their political predispositions. Some research has investigated this potential source of political fragmentation and intolerance, finding that people do indeed select and pay more attention to political information they agree with (Garrett, 2009; Graf & Adday, 2008; Knobloch-Westerwick & Kleinman, 2012; Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng, 2011). However, Leyva added: 'The results also show that participants will in the second instance select content with dissonant information, albeit they will spend less time reading it. Although this research is still developing, it thus far suggests that people will not automatically avoid content with dissonant information.'

Time for you to engage

How do we reverse political disengagement? Half of political science and much of psychology is devoted to this question, so we could never expect to get to the bottom of it in a brief article. But our readers have shown a willingness to engage politically over the years, for example with repeated discussions in these pages over the impact of austerity measures. So we hope the perspectives presented here will serve as a bridge to other sources, and a spark for further discussion and debate. For example, does the voting process itself impact upon political engagement? Is the selection process producing an unrepresentative bunch of MPs we then struggle to identify with? Might the era of 'rainbow coalitions' simply be too complex for the average person on the street to engage with? We would like to hear from you on all these angles and any others – e-mail psychologist@bps.org.uk or comment on the online version of this article via www.thepsychologist.org.uk.

I **Ella Rhodes** *is staff journalist for The Psychologist. ella.rhodes@bps.org.uk*

ARTICLE

Becoming an MP

Helena Cooper-Thomas considers the transition into the role, and how this compares with other workplaces

Politics fascinates us. What politicians do – both in their public and private lives – fills media columns and is the subject of everyday conversation. Yet how much do we know about the role of an MP? And more importantly, how do politicians themselves figure out how to be an MP?

Newcomers to any role have to manage a transition, and how they do this is a fascinating topic for us psychologists. Members of Parliament surely have one of the swiftest transitions in being expected to perform their role competently, and under intense scrutiny. From day one, everything they say in the House is recorded for posterity and their actions at select committee are visible to the media and public. They are expected to engage with the media and the public, but only in ways that benefit their party, and not too little or too much. And even politicians in their own party are both colleagues and rivals. How do they manage all this?

The power and teeth of the party

While there are constant improvements in the formal training provided to politicians (Rush & Giddings, 2011), much of the requisite knowledge can only be learned informally. My interview research with UK MPs, along with Jo Silvester (Silvester & Cooper-Thomas, 2012), revealed two main channels for newcomer adjustment: the new MP themselves acting and reflecting on their experiences, and support or learning provided by experienced colleagues.

As a resource themselves, new MPs need to be proactive to fathom out the role. As one UK MP noted in reflecting on their experiences, you have to 'be motivated enough to put yourself through an apprenticeship of your own making'. With regard to assistance from colleagues, party whips are extremely knowledgeable about how Parliament works and are a potential resource. Whips are responsible for party discipline, in particular managing voting, and in their aim of maintaining party cohesion they may try to influence new MPs using reward (such as information or help) and punishment (e.g. allocation of portfolio work that is more laborious or lower profile). In our UK research, one experienced MP highlighted the contrast in whips' treatment of new MPs from the campaign trail to entering Parliament, stating 'Up to that point they [new MPs] will have received nothing but goodies from the Party – now they begin to feel the power and the teeth of the Party'. Colleagues of new MPs may prove similarly unpredictable: an experienced UK MP remarked: 'No one should pander to the needs of new MPs.' Echoing this, a new MP observed: 'It took me 12 months learning who I could trust, learning that you're being told things that are useful to others – not you – that you're being used.' Unsurprisingly, in the ultimate of political environments, new MPs must learn to manoeuvre carefully and keep their wits about them.

> "new MPs need to be proactive to fathom out the role"

New employee adjustment

Interviews with UK MPs reveal a fascinating glimpse of the complex environment that new MPs enter and the need for them to proceed cautiously, yet bravely. This contrasts with the long history of research on what is known as organisational socialisation, that is, the process of getting new employees up to speed in their roles (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Historically, organisational socialisation research has investigated highly structured contexts, including recruits starting in the police, military, healthcare, accountancy and other

questions

What role should colleagues ideally play in new employee adjustment?

Who is in the best position to evaluate MP performance? Whips, colleagues, the media or the public?

As psychologists, our knowledge should be based on good research evidence. Can we trust the media to provide trustworthy evidence?

resources

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Advice for new employees

In any new role, whether starting as an MP, psychologist or PhD student, there are various paradoxes to resolve. Here are some evidence-based suggestions.

1. Investing effort early on to build good relationships with colleagues can save time later. Accept and offer social invitations to go for coffee or lunch so that you can learn through your colleagues, and in particular, get access to the 'hidden' information about how things are done. Try to establish a broad network of relationships – experienced colleagues know how things really work, whereas newer colleagues may have recently acquired solutions to problems that you are about to face.
2. Ask questions. People expect newcomers to have some knowledge gaps that they need to fill. You will look more foolish if you ask later.
3. Choose effective role models. These may vary across the different parts of your job – one colleague may be particularly good at public speaking; another may be good at liaising with stakeholders. Observe what works well and adopt similar strategies where these suit.
4. Be brave and get on with the 'doing' part of the role. Everyone makes mistakes, and colleagues are more likely to overlook these when you are new. Accept that you will sometimes slip up, hope that it will not be too public, and get going.

professional services (e.g. Bauer & Green, 1998; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002). Meta-analyses confirm that newcomers whose organisation provides a structured socialisation process report better outcomes (Bauer et al., 2007; Saks et al., 2007). These include more immediate outcomes of self-efficacy, role clarity, and perceived social integration and fit, as well as more distal attitudinal outcomes of job satisfaction, organisational commitment, job performance and intent to stay. Hence the traditional focus has been on how organisations have delivered learning, via experienced colleagues, that enables newcomers to rapidly integrate into the organisation, perform their role and think and behave like their experienced colleagues (Thomas & Anderson, 1998).

The importance of proactive behaviour

With the rise of the service economy, fewer organisations recruit newcomers as a cohort to perform a single role in a prescribed manner. Moreover most newcomers enter organisations with work experience. Consequently, organisations have less reason to offer structured training programmes that shape neophyte workers entering similar roles. Newcomers must take responsibility for their own adjustment in many settings, including politics.

In line with this, researchers have increasingly focused on what newcomers can achieve through their own proactive behaviours. These behaviours include seeking information and feedback, socialising with colleagues, networking, role modelling off senior colleagues and developing a good working relationship with one's manager. When newcomers behave more proactively, they report more learning and understanding of their role, more positive attitudes including job satisfaction and work engagement, and greater well-being (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012; Cooper-Thomas et al., 2014; Saks et al., 2011).

The role of colleagues

Alongside newcomer proactive behaviour, newcomers' colleagues play an important role in newcomer adjustment. In constructive work environments, colleagues both act as a resource for proactive behaviour – for example, answering questions or providing a role model – and actively support newcomers to learn about their role, team and the organisation more broadly. For newcomers, having supportive colleagues is associated with higher levels of proactive behaviour and positive attitudes more broadly (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013; Nifadkar et al., 2012).

However, there is a potential dark side to colleagues' behaviours towards newcomers. Recent research conducted in law firms, call centres, and universities (investigating non-faculty staff) found that senior colleagues can be verbally aggressive, undermining and can sometimes pressure newcomers to behave against their values. In turn, newcomers provide less help to colleagues, experience higher ethical conflict and emotional exhaustion, perform less well and are more likely to quit (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2012; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013; Nifadkar et al., 2012).

The other side of the world

The combination of our initial research with UK MPs, the increasing prevalence of individualised newcomer adjustment paths plus the emerging evidence of negative collegial behaviours suggested

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there was much more to be learned from investigating the experiences of new politicians. More specifically, although most politicians start as part of a post-election cohort, there is no structured apprenticeship. The reality is that they have to hit the ground running and be competent in their role from day one, or at least appear so. This individualised, self-motivated transition is the reality for many newcomers across roles and industries nowadays, and therefore it is important to understand and subsequently optimise the process for the benefit of both newcomers and organisations. Additionally, given our glimpse of the highly negative behaviours from new UK MPs' political colleagues, we considered that the partisan context of politics could be especially revealing for understanding the negative experiences of newcomer politicians.

Our recent research was conducted in New Zealand (NZ), which has a single House of Representatives (commonly called 'Parliament') and mixed member proportional voting. This means that parties have both electorate and list politicians, and each voter has two votes – one for their preferred political party and one for their preferred electorate MP. We studied new MPs entering the 50th Parliament in 2011. Of 121 MPs, we interviewed 23 of 28 new MPs across four political parties.

A report on this research (see tinyurl.com/kaa5wkl) was written for participant new MPs, future new MPs and those responsible for helping new MPs to adjust (e.g. civil servants, party whips; Cooper-Thomas & Silvester, 2014). Here we focus on the paradoxes that new MPs have to navigate, identifying three particularly tricky issues:

- balancing the roles of competent versus novice politician;
- working alongside yet competing with colleagues; and
- being present but not dominant in the media.

New Zealand parliament building

Balancing the roles of competent versus novice politician

New MPs need to look competent immediately to confirm to the public and their own political party that they selected well. In other words, they need to be an MP from day one. While many new MPs emphasised the importance of listening and watching how others acted in order to learn, often they did not have the luxury of time. As an example, one MP said that following your 'maiden' speech in the House (the debating chamber), 'the next day you could be put in the House and speaking on a bill you know absolutely nothing about, that you've no experience of, and don't know why it's there'.

New MPs needed to act in order to fulfil their role, but every action could reveal either competence or naivety. Two types of proactive behaviour illustrate these tensions. The first of these behaviours is asking questions. While asking questions *might* allow MPs to gain the specific information required, this was not guaranteed, and even asking a question reveals ignorance; yet speaking without knowing an issue well is extremely risky. 'If you don't know something you don't necessarily want to admit it, depending on what the issue is. …there is that tension, you don't want to look stupid by being ignorant but equally you can show great ignorance by having not actually engaged with people, and you can put your foot right in it.'

A second proactive behaviour mentioned by new MPs was the importance of just getting on with it and having a go, known as experimenting or trial and error in the research literature. Some new MPs reported that they were advised by more experienced MPs to have a go and just get on with it, while others felt that MPs were defined by their actions, hence it was critical to get on with doing. According to one new MP 'when you're new you can get away with a few things and you'll learn'. Indeed, because much of the informal etiquette is not written down anywhere, such as behaviour in the House, much learning occurred through coming up against the rules, sometimes by mistakenly transgressing them. In line with this, small errors were common: during my interviews with new MPs, when I asked if they would do anything differently if they were new again, almost all had something they would change, however small.

Working alongside yet competing with colleagues

Politics is all about relationships, hence new MPs need to establish rapport with colleagues in order to learn and be successful. While new MPs need help from colleagues to figure things out, alongside this experienced politicians are careful about who to help – they do not want to be associated with new MPs who are needy or fail to adjust, and they may limit their assistance to new MPs who look too competent as this could accelerate these new MPs becoming competitors for positions and perks such as preferred portfolios, chairs of committees, or delegations overseas. Hence one new MP identified the caucus environment as particularly demanding: 'You go in there and you're colleagues and friends but you're also rivals. And so it's not unique I mean, most workforces are like that as well, and there's an element to it, but the rivalry I suppose is a little bit more intense.' As this new MP notes, this rivalry is not unique – in any team, members may be competing for perks, resources or the next promotion. Professional (and sometimes amateur) sports teams provide another clear example of this where players compete to be picked for matches. But the intensity of the competition seems unique to politics. Within political parties there is a constant comparison and vying for opportunities: 'It's quite a fiercely competitive environment, we're competing for resources… for media attention… for questions… when the House is sitting.'

Yet in spite of this rivalry, new MPs recommended some level of cautious trust with colleagues. While noting 'look it's politics, you're not necessarily trusting

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everyone 100 per cent', new MPs affirmed the value of having colleagues to talk with. Several new MPs suggested this should be a single person: 'Find somebody – go off your gut who that person is … I'm not saying that you trust them with your secrets, I'm just saying that they are a person that you can go to to bounce ideas off. Because at the end of the day this is not an environment of trust.' In line with this, new MPs reported that much of their learning was through informal conversations, both within and across political parties. Examples of when such conversations took place between MPs included casual chats on evenings when Parliament was in session, visits to electorates, and on overseas delegations.

Being present but not dominant in the media

The third area of paradox facing new MPs was how to manage the tensions of needing personally to have a sufficient media presence so that the public could see you being effective as an MP, while allowing senior politicians to have a greater public profile for the overall benefit of the party. There were risks of too little or too much media presence. Too few column inches and you were invisible and could lose opportunities and even fail to be reselected by your party. Too many column inches and you could be seen as overstepping the mark by senior politicians, and in that way stymie your career.

The case of a junior MP working within a portfolio illustrates this conundrum. Junior MPs are often assigned preparatory work on an issue within their portfolio. They then brief a senior MP who presents the issue publicly. One new MP talked about her media experience with regard to a particular issue that she had worked extremely hard on and was passionate about: 'I'm the *portfolio* spokesperson, but we kicked that upstairs to the leader, because one it raises their profile but it also gives it [the portfolio] extra mana [*mana* is Maori meaning power or status] with the media as well'. Yet this same MP noted the consequent harm from her lack of presence in the media, with a prominent blogger calling her invisible, and her frustration that she could not defend herself because her work on the portfolio was indeed concealed.

While the previous example is from an opposition MP, the same quandary faces government MPs: 'As a government backbencher, on the one hand, basically if you're in the news you're in trouble, is the basic mantra for a government backbencher. They want the Prime Minister to be in the news, and the Ministers, not backbenchers getting in the way. But at the same time, if after three years you haven't been seen to do anything… or been in the news, then the public will say, "Well who is this turkey, what has he been doing?" So again, there's a fine line to being… not getting in the way, but being sufficiently visible. And any direction you go, it's all a tricky balancing act, trying to get the right line.'

Insights from New Zealand MPs

As noted above, this research with MPs new to NZ's Parliament was motivated both by the increasing prevalence of individualised newcomer adjustment paths and the emerging evidence of negative collegial behaviours across various industries, including our own research in UK politics. Firstly, with regard to negative behaviours, while new NZ MPs commonly noted a lack of trust, we were surprised to find no hints of the manipulative behaviour evident in our UK MP research. There was slim evidence for false information, with one new MP commenting: 'Oh, yeah you get bullshit from some of the opposition MPs, basically trying to feed you false information but it's fairly obvious.' A handful of MPs had also been unpleasantly surprised by what they saw as vicious and unnecessary attacks on them in the House or other public forums, but viewed this as petty oppositional politics, making personal attacks to try and damage the opposition party. Overall, there was not the same undercurrent of manipulation as in the UK interviews.

When I asked about this, several new MPs suggested that because NZ's Parliament has so few MPs overall, and everyone knows each other, MPs could not risk spreading malicious information or being underhand because they would quickly be found out and tarnish their reputation. Indeed, related to this, many new MPs reported being surprised at how collegial inter-party relations were, and noted how this enabled NZ's Parliament to run more smoothly (the exception being aggressive debates in the House).

Secondly, picking up on the idea of individualised socialisation, MPs noted that there were many ways to be an MP. Some chose to prioritise the role of legislator, others worked primarily as a problem solver within their electorate, while others campaigned for progress on specific portfolios, such as the economy, health or transport. These were all acceptable ways of being successful in the role. Equally, this may be true in many service roles nowadays, whereby there is no one right way to provide a service. It also meshes with the potential obsolescence of structured organisational socialisation programmes and the need for more flexible provision of resources for adjustment (Saks & Gruman, 2012).

In politics as in many other environments, there is no one clear route to success and no rule book covering all eventualities. This confirms how important it is for newcomers to figure it out for themselves, while also weighing up advice from experienced colleagues. As one MP observed with regard to learning about the informal aspects of how Parliament worked: 'It's an absolute mystery in some respects. For example around promotion, when a Minister resigns, or someone like that, that leads to somebody replacing them and that leads to a reshuffle amongst the chairmen, select committees and so forth. Whether to lobby openly for a job or just to be quiet and let your experience tell the story, you know there's endless theories from different people and people will tell you the opposite thing. What works and what doesn't work… there's no… [laugh]… there's no set rule.' This reveals the complexities of becoming and being an MP, and the need for individual politicians to navigate their own path. New employees in other contexts face many of these same conundrums of how to be successful, and similarly must deal with conflicting advice and figure out which proactive behaviours work for them. Hence while research with new politicians is fascinating as an extreme environment, it is useful also for the insights it provides for newcomers in general.

Concluding thoughts

Being an MP is hard work (Weinberg, 2012), but becoming an MP is arguably harder. For myself, before starting research in politics, my knowledge of MPs was through the lens of the media. Interviewing new MPs and frankly discussing the highs and lows of their newcomer experiences gave me an unexpected appreciation and respect for what they put themselves through. Of all newcomer adjustment processes, the path of new MPs is one of the most complex and fascinating.

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ARTICLE

Developing strong and diverse political leaders

Jo Silvester and **Madeleine Wyatt** look at the issue of training for politicians, and its relationship with work psychology

In 1882 Robert Louis Stevenson commented that 'Politics is perhaps the only profession for which no preparation is deemed necessary', and today it seems that his comments still hold. Despite a wealth of understanding in work psychology about how to train and support people in work roles, very few efforts have been made to apply this knowledge to political work.

Can we explain this lack of support and development for new and existing politicians? And could such provision be potentially problematic precisely because it challenges many of our taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of work and learning?

questions

Could training for politicians do more harm than good?

What can psychologists learn from politics and politicians?

resources

Inter-Parliamentary Union: www.ipu.org
Politician personality, Machiavellianism, and political skill: tinyurl.com/nr3bmma
BAME leaders' career experience: tinyurl.com/njlwozd

Strong and fair leadership is vital in a democracy. Psychologists know a considerable amount about developing people in their jobs in order to give the best chance of this (cf. Aguinas & Kraiger, 2009), yet we have had remarkably little to say about some of the most important questions relating to democratic leadership. What do we mean by good political performance? How can we support and encourage aspiring politicians? How can we develop strong and diverse political talent? While political scientists and the media are all too ready to debate whether or not MPs should have second jobs, or whether too many new politicians enter Parliament with no experience of the workplace beyond being a political intern or researcher for a MP, the voices of work psychologists remain conspicuous by their absence.

> "...we were surprised by the lack of training for political roles..."

In this article we argue that work psychology as a discipline has much to contribute to these debates, and to more fundamental questions about the nature and importance of political work. We focus in particular on the question of why, compared with the considerable efforts and monies devoted to developing public- and private-sector leaders, so little formal support and development is available for aspiring and incumbent politicians. We suggest that while it might be easy to blame this lack of training on politicians themselves – to ascribe the apparent reluctance to admit or address development needs to arrogance, hubris or self-interest – there may be legitimate reasons for being wary about introducing training to politics. Furthermore, we argue that while developing 'good politicians' is both a fascinating and important challenge, it also prompts questions about some of the underlying assumptions of work and performance that can limit the application of work psychology in senior, more ambiguous work roles. In short, we propose that politics and psychology have much to learn from each other.

Common sources of resistance

When we began working with politicians and political parties just over a decade ago, we were surprised by the lack of training for political roles, as well as a general resistance to the idea of formal development for politicians. Over the course of several projects we were able to capture the views of MPs, parliamentary candidates and local councillors, and three common sources of resistance towards training and development emerged.

The first view is that politicians simply don't need training or development. This might look like arrogance (i.e. 'I am elected by the people, so why do I need training?'). But unlike other professionals political candidates are not expected to possess a specific body of knowledge or skills. We do not insist that our politicians pass certain exams in order to be elected. In fact, the very nature of democratic process means that we assume elected representatives should be able to rely on the knowledge and expertise they have already acquired outside politics to help them perform their political roles. And where they lack certain knowledge or expertise, politicians are able to rely on the support of appointed officials, such as civil servants or local government officers, to help them make sense of political procedures and technical areas. However,

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as Weber argues, relying on the expertise of employed officers or civil servants is also problematic, because a lack of knowledge can leave politicians 'in the position of the "dilettante" who stands opposite the "expert"' (Weber, cited in Gerth & Mills, 1946, p.232), or at the very least less powerful than the trained officials who manage the administration. Arguably, therefore, politicians still need to know enough to be able to evaluate the information they are given, and to challenge decisions effectively if required.

The second view is that practical challenges make it difficult to provide or engage in training and development: usually insufficient time, or a lack of available resources to support training activities. Certainly political roles can require a 24/7 commitment from MPs, who need to split their time between Westminster and their local constituencies (Weinberg & Cooper, 2003). However, with 180 of the current 650 British MPs declaring second jobs that generate total earnings of more than £7.4 million (according to the *Financial Times*, 23 February 2015), it does seem that time could well be found if the motivation was there to do so. The practical challenge is probably more difficult for local politicians who, unlike MPs, are not usually paid for their roles, and by volunteering their time often struggle to maintain a balance between the demands of paid employment, family commitments, and council duties.

Potentially more problematic, albeit less discussed, are public attitudes towards spending money on training and development for politicians. This is frequently attacked in the press as an unnecessary, self-indulgent and self-serving expense on the part of elected leaders who may be in their role for relatively short periods of time, with no guarantee of re-election. Training may also be seen as a Machiavellian means for politicians to increase their power over others (Searing, 1995). Therefore, despite a growing dialogue about the need to support new politicians (see Cooper-Thomas, this issue, p.364; Fox & Korris, 2012; Steinack, 2012), limited public awareness about the nature and challenges of political work remains an important barrier to the introduction of development activities.

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Of the people, by the people, for the people?

The third reason for resisting training relates to the belief that the introduction of training and development poses a threat to democratic process. At first this appears to reflect hubris on the part of politicians (i.e. 'I'm elected, so who are you to tell me I need training?') But on closer inspection such resistance reflects an underlying narrative about the need to navigate a complex, ambiguous, contested environment, where power is the currency of success and politics the work by which this currency is won or lost. Thus resistance to training and development for politicians derives in part from the belief that such formal activities undermine the legitimate right of elected representatives to determine how they will enact their roles and represent the needs and views of their constituents. It's a power struggle, about who has the right to determine or define the content and performance of political roles. Ferris and Judge (1991) point out that human resource management systems such as training and development are political systems in their own right because they exist to perpetuate managers' control over employees. Formal training in politics could legitimise certain types and areas of knowledge, and imply a 'higher order' with the power to determine the actions of elected representatives.

King (1981) argues that politicians are not professionals, because they are not expected to possess a distinct body of technical knowledge when they are elected – nor are they required to develop one once in office. Not only does this mean that politicians have the legitimate power to determine for themselves what and how they should learn, it also means that political roles can be open to individuals from all backgrounds who possess diverse knowledge and skills acquired via education, work or life experience. Put simply, formal training and development challenges Abraham Lincoln's basic premise of democracy that government should be 'of the people, by the people, for the people'.

Of course, this also raises an important question for work psychologists: if much of our discipline is devoted to creating systems to select, assess and develop employees that are based on prescribed managerial norms and needs, and that therefore help to strengthen managerial power and authority – does this make the discipline inherently undemocratic? More specifically, do work psychologists pay insufficient attention to the pluralistic and potentially conflicting needs and views of different groups within the workplace?

The challenge of inclusion

While there may be persuasive arguments as to why formal training for aspiring or incumbent politicians should be treated with caution, the real challenge lies in

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identifying an alternative to the current situation. At present a lack of formal development means that new politicians must rely overwhelmingly on informal strategies to learn about their roles; yet some MPs have significant advantage over others when it comes to acquiring knowledge. As shown in Cooper-Thomas's article (this issue, p.364), new MPs are socialised by sitting MPs and civil servants. However, some new MPs will have gained insider knowledge of Parliament and possible 'routes to power' before they were elected, because they have served as interns, research assistants or supporters of sitting MPs. Those who lack access to insiders must rely on their own efforts to make sense of, and decode, observable actions of significant others. Not only is this process likely to take considerably longer, it is also much more likely to lead to embarrassing mistakes that can reduce the likelihood of being perceived as competent and promoted to significant roles within Parliament.

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It will take as many as 14 elections to achieve gender parity at national level

Thus a key problem with these procedures is that, as we see in other organisational contexts, learning depends on gatekeepers willing to share their knowledge and understanding (Blass et al., 2007; Mann, 1995). Those with less privileged access lose out and are overtaken by those who have already developed networks. Not only does this slow learning down, it poses significant risks for diversity and inclusion (Silvester & Wyatt, in press).

There is plenty of evidence that informal ambiguity in the workplace increases the likelihood of unfair discrimination, and reduces access to the information and political knowledge necessary to gain power and influence (cf. Eagly & Carli, 2007). We see this happen with minority groups in other work settings: for example, senior black and minority ethnic leaders in a government department described finding it more difficult to develop the knowledge and skills required for leadership positions (Wyatt & Silvester, 2015). The information required to navigate the labyrinth of complex paths to power is selectively passed via developmental relationships, informal interactions with mentors, sponsors and network contacts who are usually white males. It can be difficult for women and minority groups to gain access to these groups and thus to learn the 'rules of the game'.

Work psychologists therefore frequently introduce formal structured assessment procedures to ensure fairness, by focusing decisions on job-related competences and skills rather than on whether an individual is known by significant others. In politics, however, power and influence is both achieved and enacted through relationships. Thus patronage (i.e. being a 'favoured son or daughter': Shepherd-Robinson & Lovenduski, 2002) can significantly increase the likelihood that an individual will be chosen as a candidate for a constituency. Similarly, once they enter Parliament, patronage also helps to ensure certain new MPs have access to information that makes it easier for them to navigate the perplexing parliamentary environment. Yet this also means that those who have the power to offer patronage, and who control what information can be divulged to whom, are likely to be more resistant to formal development systems because these undermine their ability (i.e. power) to influence. Formal development may therefore serve to level the playing field. However, it may still not succeed in improving diversity and inclusion if it focuses exclusively on explicit, task-related and technical skills without paying sufficient attention to the tacit or more secretive knowledge that individuals need to navigate their environments successfully (Doldor, 2013).

There is clearly a need to address the lack of diversity in politics. After the last general election black and minority ethnic individuals comprised 4 per cent and women 23 per cent of MPs (and just four of the 23 cabinet ministers) in the House of Commons (Keep, 2010), a figure that placed the UK 60th in the world in terms of female parliamentary representation, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The Equality and Human Rights Commission estimates that it will take as many as 14 elections to achieve gender parity at national level. Similar figures are found at local level where 32 per cent of elected councillors are women. As formal development activities equalise access to task-related, technical skills and implicit knowledge, they should also increase the speed at which new MPs (particularly those from non-traditional backgrounds) make the transition into Parliament. Formal development is therefore a strategy that should be pursued.

In fact, significant efforts were made to respond to the need for more formal provision of political development in local government following the election of a Labour government in 1997. Facilitated by establishment of the Improvement and Development Agency (more recently the Local Government Association), councillor development activities were initiated, such as the Next Generation for Talented Councillors programme, which aims to train and develop councillors in the workings of government and support them to progress in their political careers. A number of other initiatives were also introduced, such as toolkits and peer mentoring to support development of political skills amongst councillors (Silvester & Menges, 2011). Although advances were made in promoting the need for training and development, many of these efforts suffered in cuts after the financial crisis in 2008.

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Therefore, despite lack of need and the threat to democratic process being cited as reasons for not engaging in training and development, there clearly is a case for greater provision of formal development for politicians, which may act as a mechanism to enhance the fairness and diversity of the democratic process. Korris (2014) argues that party leaders need to insist that their new MPs make time to train, oppose the training-resistant culture, and to stand up to the media. Yet there remains the practical challenge of how to identify the areas of knowledge and skill required by politicians in general and design learning activities that accommodate a much broader range of knowledge, skills and abilities than typically found in an employee group (Silvester, 2012; Silvester & Dykes, 2007).

Practical next steps

There appears to be growing recognition that new MPs in particular need more support. In their review of British MPs entering Parliament for the first time in 2010, Fox and Korris (2012) found that while most knew a lot about being a constituency MP from their time campaigning as parliamentary candidates, few had thought much beyond the point of being elected; either because they had been too busy campaigning or for fear of tempting fate (or appearing hubristic) by assuming they would win. A recent BBC 'fly-on-the-wall' programme, which followed those who work in the British Houses of Parliament, provided an excellent insight into the realities of political workings that appear, on the one hand, as steeped in ritual, history and tradition, and on the other, as nothing less than a shambolic collection of ad hoc and often unnecessary practices. It is easy to understand why there are calls for the professionalisation of Parliament, including the introduction of modern business practices reminiscent of 'customer service' and 'efficiency'. Yet Parliament is not a business and care must be taken to understand the unique nature of work within a legislature in order to understand how to modernise practices whilst preserving tradition and respecting democratic process (Silvester & Spicer, 2014).

Most importantly, if formal development opportunities are to be offered, care needs to be taken to determine *what* and *how* politicians need to learn. It may not be possible or desirable for new politicians to have equivalent technical knowledge in areas like finance or operations, but they will need a broad understanding of how government works (including constitutional procedures) and how to work effectively in their local political context. Arguably, politicians also need to be able to deal with competing groups, conflicted interests, and powerful lobbyists, and be able to navigate their environment and achieve their objectives. So political development poses a fascinating challenge; how would we address it?

Firstly, we believe that it is important to improve inclusive learning opportunities for aspiring politicians who lack access to informal sources of information and learning about political roles. To do so much could be learned from existing shadowing schemes and leadership programmes like those offered by Operation Black Vote, an organisation that aims to enhance ethnic minority political engagement and skills. Secondly, we argue that the political parties need to recognise the importance of development and commit to supporting learning opportunities for new and aspiring politicians. These might involve widening participation in schemes such as the Political Mentoring Programme, launched by the Local Government Group in 2006 (see Silvester & Menges, 2011), and the introduction of formal induction or on-boarding programmes for politicians at local and national level.

We also believe that there is a need to build broader awareness of the knowledge and skills that are important for political roles and to improve cross-party (and potentially non-party) access to activities that can support their development. Although existing work in local government has identified core competences for councillor roles (see tinyurl.com/qdbelt8) more work needs to be done to embed these into learning and training activities and to support their continual evaluation and implementation. It is also important to recognise and protect the legitimate right that politicians have to choose to engage (or not) in development. This means that greater effort should be placed on helping politicians and aspiring politicians to understand how and why learning can enhance their democratic power rather than diminish it. To facilitate politician-led development more use could be made of feedback provided via 360-degree review procedures that allow politicians to identify potential raters and where feedback can remain anonymous and confidential (see Silvester et al., 2014). Although the act of providing feedback remains inherently political, this type of method, where politicians (rather than managers) 'own' feedback, can reduce the perceived threat to the democratic process. Equally important is the need for much greater public awareness of the demands, challenges and importance of political roles; as well as more recognition of the need for funding and support for formal training and development.

However, we also argue that there is a critical need for work psychologists to recognise and understand the inherently political nature of learning and development and work more generally. This might include embedding power and politics as core knowledge areas for professional training in work psychology. By relinquishing the widely subscribed assumption that there is a single 'objective' view of work performance, for example, it becomes possible to recognise that politicians (as well as senior professionals in other fields) require the freedom to shape and communicate their own personal definitions of what good performance looks like in their roles.

Finally, there is a need for more focus on what business leaders can learn from politicians. While research into the political skill of managers is burgeoning (Ferris et al., 2012), for example, relatively little draws explicit links with politicians and political work. It is not just politicians who need to navigate complex environments, manage opposing views and mobilise coalitions of support, and we might learn a great deal from politicians that is pertinent to the political nature of senior organisational positions. Politics reminds us that knowledge is power and that those who hold or control access to knowledge also have the potential to change the balance of power, and to determine who else can achieve power and influence. We remain convinced that the field of psychology as a whole has much to offer the political domain, but it is equally important that work psychologists recognise their own roles as political actors in the workplace.

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ARTICLE

The age of celebrity politics

Sharon Coen considers psychology's role in a modern phenomenon

From celebrity candidates and aspiring singing Prime Ministers to candidates becoming the focus of gossip magazines, the boundaries between celebrity and politics are becoming increasingly blurred. With the National Elections approaching, this article reflects on the phenomenon of personalisation of politics and its possible effects on the democratic process. In particular, we focus on how social, political and media psychology can contribute to explaining the phenomenon and its impact on voters' attitudes and behaviours.

questions

What are the psychological processes involved in the formation of political judgements concerning candidates?

What are the psychological underpinnings of political engagement?

What role do the media play in promoting and/or hindering political engagement??

resources

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For some time now, scholars and the public alike have bemoaned a sharp change in the way politics is lived by citizens (especially in the Western democracies). With politicians of all hues generally sharing a liberal market consensus, it can be hard to distinguish between the various manifestos. As the author Keith Sutherland put it in 2004, 'The party's over'. With the prominence of political ideology receding, individual personalities come to the fore.

This phenomenon is well captured by the concept of audience democracy, proposed by Manin (1995, English edition 1997). De Beus (2011) describes a shift, over the last 20 or so years, away from traditional parties' democracy. The political party was the dominant actor in the field of politics, the party programme the leading principle, and competence the virtue for which politicians strived and with which they legitimised their politics. Instead, we now have audience democracy, in which personalities are favoured over the party, performance over the programme and authenticity over competence.

Of course, some would argue there has been superficiality on the political stage going back much more than 20 years. Indeed, De Beus notes that audience democracy resonates with Edelman's notion of symbolic politics from 1967. He claimed that the instrumental dimension of politics was gradually being replaced by a dramaturgical one and by spectacle, while political actors employed symbols and rituals for public consumption via the media.

New or old, there is little doubt therefore that this process has been facilitated by the ever-increasing role played by the media in political debate. For decades, communications scholars have argued that the media (in particular, TV and, later, the internet) constitute the new 'public sphere', the place where issues relevant to citizenship and society at large are debated and elaborated. Political reporting in the news media is increasingly 'personalised', presenting issues as personal opinions of a single politician rather than ideological or party-driven. Similarly, the acceptance or rejection of a political argument is increasingly attributed to the person making the argument rather than the ideological standpoint the argument is built upon. Thus, in the UK, we are no longer talking about what 'Labour', 'Liberal Democrats' or 'Conservatives' propose, we are debating what Miliband, Clegg or Cameron say (although not all agree on this trend, e.g. Vliegenthart et al., 2011).

> "Political reporting in the news media is increasingly 'personalised'"

This shift towards the personalisation of politics is accompanied by an increasing scrutiny of the private lives and affairs of politicians, rather than their institutional successes and failures. Van Aelst et al. (2012) highlighted this tendency towards 'privatisation' (i.e. a focus on the politician as a private individual as opposed to a politician as a public official) and 'personalisation' (a progressive shift towards focusing on non-politically relevant traits). They distinguish this from the shift towards 'individualisation' (coverage of individuals as opposed to institutions). Individualisation itself can be considered in terms of a general increase in the visibility of individual political representatives in the media, and in terms

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Dibble, J.L. & Rosaen, S.F. (2011). Parasocial interaction as more tha friendship: Evidence for parasocial

of the concentration of media attention on political personalities who occupy leadership roles, such as party leaders or presidents.

Virtually all of this reporting and communication is mediated, and delivered in a 'one-to-many' direction. As citizens, we rarely have a chance to interact directly with our aspiring – or actual – political representatives. New technologies and the internet have introduced an element of interactivity, which some argue can significantly alter the relationship between politics, politicians and the public, but even in this case it is safe to say that the relationship citizens establish with politicians is mostly parasocial.

Parasocial interaction

Parasocial interactions (PSI: see Giles, 2002) are relationships that the public establishes with characters in the media. These can be real or fictional characters: for example, the public can establish PSIs with characters in a movie or in soap operas, or with actors, musicians, famous sportsmen and sportswomen. Horton and Wohl (1956) first illustrated this phenomenon in detail, arguing that the modern media (at the time, radio, TV and press) encourage the establishment of PSIs by 'coaching the audience' into believing they are somehow part of the events portrayed. (For a recent replication and extension, see Hartmann and Goldhoorn, 2011.)

Nowadays, the internet and social networking platforms such as Twitter and Facebook offer new opportunities for parasocial interaction between politicians and voters. This creates anomalies for parasocial interaction itself, for example when politicians respond directly to tweets from the public. These changes need to be further explored by psychologists interested in both media and political communication in order to understand their impact.

While a significant proportion of scholars conceptualise PSIs as inherently positive (such as forms of mediated 'friendship'), others suggest that PSIs are a much wider phenomenon, and that people also establish them with media characters they dislike (e.g. Dibble & Rosaen, 2011). Importantly, research in this area seems to suggest that there are substantial parallels between social and parasocial interaction: perceived similarity and attraction are examples of factors that are important in the establishment of both real-life friendships and PSIs.

Similarly, political psychologists have tried to identify the role played by individual traits and characteristics in the success of political candidates. Appearance, gender and demographic characteristics are all relevant to voting choices (e.g. for an overview, see Catellani, 2011), and evaluations of politicians' morality and leadership appear particularly important (e.g. Cislak & Wojciszke, 2008). Voters tend to favour political candidates who match their own personality characteristics and sets of values (Caprara & Zimbardo, 2004), and extraversion and sociability also play a role (see Mazzoleni & Sfardini, 2009). By providing further information on such traits and characteristics across a variety of media – Twitter, radio interviews, live televised debates and more – politicians are supplying a rich vein of evaluative information. Of course, this information may or may not be relevant to the task in hand.

GETTY IMAGES

The history of politics is populated by illustrious examples of celebrity figures achieving success

Heroes and villains

With the growing focus on individuals rather than ideas or institutions, and with the rising interest in the private aspects of politicians' lives, the boundaries between 'hard' and 'soft' news are becoming increasingly blurred, and so are those between institutional figures and celebrities within the public realm. Thus, we see politicians portrayed as heroes or villains, in line with the classical melodramatic narrative (see Mancini & Swanson, 1996), and the emergence of a 'celebrity' politician.

According to Street (2004) there are two types of 'celebrity' politicians: the first, a person who achieved a celebrity status prior to entering the political scene (examples could be the US actor Arnold Schwarzenegger or the Italian comedian Beppe Grillo), the second, a 'professional' politician who, either by association or adopting the appropriate communication styles and avenues (e.g. Tony Blair posing with the England football team) assumes celebrity status. A third possible type could be a 'professional' politician who, by no will of their own, achieves 'celebrity' status by being a target of gossip and tabloid attention (often the case with women in politics: see Mazzoni & Ciaglia, 2013). How can research in psychology help us to understand each type of celebrity politician?

The history of politics is populated by illustrious examples of celebrity figures achieving success: consider the actors

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Clint Eastwood, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Ronald Reagan, the last of whom of course reached the highest office. More recently, a young political activist won the BBC talent show *The Voice UK*: throughout the show, he was claiming he aspires to become 'the first singing black Prime Minister' in the UK. Achieving celebrity status in other domains seems therefore to be a viable pathway for aspiring politicians. Why is this?

Above all, celebrity status guarantees visibility, and therefore familiarity. Parasocial interactions (PSIs) offer an explanation here, how they arise from an illusion of familiarity with mediated characters. Getting to know a candidate through their presence in the media – regardless of the context – can foster a sense of acquaintance with the candidate. This can lead to the establishment of PSIs, which, when positive, can promote a sense of intimacy and trust.

Also, celebrities are often deemed attractive, and actors are trained on how to best deliver a message through both verbal and non-verbal cues in front of a camera. It is therefore not surprising they can deliver a more convincing performance: indeed, research has shown that Reagan's physical attractiveness and expressiveness were important factors in explaining his success in a televised debate (Patterson et al., 1992).

What about politicians who become 'celebrities'? Political scandals and details of candidates' private lives are covered not only in mainstream news, but also gossip magazines and shows (for an example in the Italian context, see Mazzoni and Ciaglia, 2014). Can psychology predict the likely consequences of exposure to news coverage of scandals? Studies (e.g. Bless & Schwarz, 1998; Schwarz & Bless, 1992) have shown how exposure to scandals can lead to both assimilation and contrast effects: on the one hand, when reminded of politicians involved in scandal, participants tended to report decreased levels of trust in the general social category of politicians, but they also reported heightened levels of trust in individual politicians (not associated with scandals). These studies suggest that coverage of scandals led to a 'vicious cycle' by shaking the public's trust in politics and 'forcing' individual politicians to stand out from the crowd and seek individual (non-scandal-related) coverage to counteract its negative effects.

Another phenomenon worthy of our consideration is political endorsement by celebrities. This is a growing phenomenon, not only in the US, where there is a long history of endorsements by VIPs of political candidates, but also in Europe. Celebrities are often invited to 'sponsor' a candidate, or attend political rallies and events. At the same time, politicians often endorse and/or attend non-political events, such as sports, entertainment and arts. In the UK it is not uncommon to see politicians partake in comedy, reality TV or talent shows (for an example in the Italian context, see Mazzoleni and Sfardini, 2009).

Once again, psychological research can help us to understand this phenomenon. Advertisers have long understood how associating a product with a liked celebrity boosts sales of the product via a series of psychological processes. For example, according to the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) and the heuristic/systematic model of persuasion (Chaiken et al., 1989), 'liking' the person who delivers the persuasive message induces heuristic rather than systematic processing of its content. The qualities attributed to the celebrity – such as likeability, attractiveness, trustworthiness, success – can transfer to the product (see Erdogan, 1999, for a review). We might argue that political candidates in the mediated world are similar to 'brands' or 'products', 'sold' to the audience via techniques borrowed from persuasion, advertisement and marketing.

GETTY IMAGES

Exposure is everything

A double-edged sword

As in advertising, exposure is everything. Presence in the media becomes paramount in the race to election: a candidate who is absent from the spotlight does not stand a chance. Borrowing the expression of the famous book by Anne Philips (which deals with representation of women in minority in the political world), mediated political communication could be seen as moving from a politics of ideas to a politics of presence. To give a concrete example, Mazzoni and Ciaglia (2013) suggest that part of the reason

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behind the failure of the centre-left political party in Italy to attract votes lies in its refusal to engage more extensively with the media.

Whether by choice or by force, politicians find themselves under this spotlight. Once there, an increasing focus on private lives as well as professional conduct, combined with the growing scepticism concerning parties and political systems, might lead to a shift in the way citizens make decisions concerning their support of political candidates – away from the issues, values and ideas brought forward by candidates and parties, and towards evaluations based on personal characteristics of the single politician.

On the one hand, this personalisation and celebritisation of politics can be seen as a positive move towards restoring citizens' engagement with politics: politicians are seen as individuals, some admired, some disliked, but they have become part of people's everyday lives and entered their homes in one way or the other. Their 'celebrity' status gives them prominence but also brings them 'back to the people': it is easier to relate to people than to abstract ideas or institutions. The opportunities offered by social networking sites and the internet in general to interact directly with politician and with news providers and the wider public (e.g. by posting comments on the articles or blogging) can be also seen as important ways in which the citizen can engage in the public debate.

On the other hand, though, it is unclear how judgements grounded on the personality or private conduct of a single individual can be predictive of political ability and efficacy. Firstly, the dimensions of leadership and competence (identified as crucial in the evaluation of political leaders by political psychologists: see Catellani, 2011) might be orthogonal to – for example – conjugal loyalty or driving habits. Secondly, focusing on the individual politician might lose sight of the fact that political decisions are made at collegial level: a prominent example could be US President Barack Obama, who was hailed as a hero and a promoter of change when he was first elected in 2009 and took a significant hit in support when he struggled in passing his healthcare bill in Congress. In democratic systems, there is little that single individuals can do on their own. Therefore, representing politics as a horserace among good/bad individuals rather than a collective process is misrepresenting the reality of the political process.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that celebrity status might have a significant impact on work-related stress and work–life balance of politicians. Being a celebrity, while having advantages, has also significant negative consequences (see Schaller, 1997): inflated expectations concerning performance at work, constantly being the object of discussion and evaluation, having to protect one's privacy and that of loved ones… all can negatively impact the politicians' well-being and their ability to perform (see Weinberg, 2011, for an analysis of work-related stress factors in politicians).

To conclude, psychological research and evidence can contribute to understanding the antecedents and consequences of the progressive shift towards a celebritisation of politics, and the role old and new media play in fostering this process. On this basis, psychology can provide important suggestions and consideration on how this phenomenon impacts the democratic process and how best to safeguard the public interest.


PAUL WOOLMITH/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

Presentation vs. political principles

The increasing focus on single individuals in mediated political communication and the extended TV coverage given to individual politicians renders non-verbal aspects of political communication particularly relevant in people's voting preferences and evaluations of candidates (see e.g. Coen, in press). For example, Todorov et al. (2005) have shown that voters's estimations of competence based on snap-judgements of candidates' faces are predictive of voting preferences, while Koppersteiner and Grammer (2010) showed how motion patterns displayed by politicians during speeches are predictive of viewers' evaluations of their personality (and thus of voters' preferences). In a very interesting study, Antonakis and Dalgas (2009) were able to identify election outcomes based on children's preferences concerning candidates' appearance. It comes therefore as no surprise that Ed Miliband felt it necessary to defend himself from attacks concerning his appearance in photos by shifting the focus on principles rather than looks (The Guardian, 25 July 2014).

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The 'minority' man?

Jessica McCarrick with the latest in our series for budding writers (see www.bps.org.uk/newvoices for more information)

What do you think of when you hear the term 'intimate partner violence'? Is it an image of an aggressive, controlling perpetrator and a fearful, submissive victim? Is that image of a female perpetrator and their fearful male partner? For many, the more prominent image would be of an aggressive male perpetrator and their victimised female partner (Dutton & White, 2013). This view highlights the influence of gender stereotypes within society, as well as media coverage and an emphasis within domestic violence research of female survivors. In 2011 I embarked upon my first year of training in counselling psychology and was, as many trainees may identify, faced with the first hurdle of the doctorate – securing my first placement. This led me to a local charity that provided services to female survivors of domestic violence. Here I began a domestic violence training course, heavily influenced by the feminist model. Although this training provided insight into the different types of abuse within families and intimate relationships, I couldn't help thinking it seemed a rather biased approach, with men predominantly painted as the aggressive, controlling perpetrators.

As happenstance would have it, the funding for placement opportunities at this service ran out and I found myself in another service, which, quite significantly, provided therapy and support to both male and female survivors. This placement developed my personal understanding of intimate partner violence (IPV) as a human issue rather than a gender issue. Learning about the plight of male survivors and the added stigma they face planted the seed for my doctoral research. Over the following three years I immersed myself in the literature of IPV and the experiences of men who have lived through it. After two years at this placement, which provided support for men in an area where no equivocal service is available, the funding was sadly cut and it has now ceased to exist. This experience, as well as the many stories of female-perpetrated partner violence that I have heard through my research and practice, added to my drive to promote the voice of male survivors. Ultimately, my ambition is to influence societal beliefs about IPV towards a balanced, gender-informed stance.

The emphasis upon female survivors within academic literature and the media is indicative of over 40 years of campaigning for women's rights to support in IPV situations. Pizzey et al. (2000) make reference to the 'ultra feminists' who aspired to define women as a victim group oppressed by men. After Erin Pizzey announced in a lecture that 62 per cent of the women seeking refuge

What the statistics can't demonstrate is the shame and emasculation that ultimately prevents countless men from reporting intimate partner violence

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in the shelter were as violent as their male partners, she was condemned by the ultra-feminist movement (Pizzey et al, 2000). Indeed, the notion that women could also be perpetrators was so controversial that early researchers discussing this received death threats (Straus, 1999). The aggressive dynamics playing out between researchers and campaigners appear to be a repetition of the aggressive relationship dynamics of the very subjects they were campaigning for. Thus, early research into IPV indicated a clear, controversial split between those believing it to be a gender issue, with men being the dominant aggressors, and those believing it to occur more equivalently between the sexes.

Recently there has been media coverage on 'police failings' in IPV situations, highlighting poor leadership and direction and insufficient victim care. However, what is striking in the media coverage of this issue is the emphasis upon female victims, with very little mention of male victims, only to state they are in the minority. Indeed, research in the northeast of England reported that the majority of IPV perpetrators recorded by the police were male and their victims predominantly female (Hester, 2013). So while it is true that the statistics suggest that male victims are in the minority, it is in my nature as a counselling psychologist to seek the story behind their face value. What the statistics can't demonstrate is the shame and emasculation (McCarrick, Davis-McCabe & Hirst-Winthrop, in press) that ultimately prevents countless men from reporting IPV.

Although I believe there is still a way to go in promoting the voice of male survivors, my ambition has been supported recently by media coverage, such as an advertising campaign promoting male survivors by Essex Police aired during last year's World Cup matches. The BPS has also written a response to the NICE draft consultation on preventing and reducing IPV (BPS, 2011; NICE, 2011). In this response, the BPS have rightly highlighted that domestic violence affects men and women across the lifespan. Subsequently the published NICE recommendations for domestic violence (NICE, 2014) refer to both men and women. However, how will this translate within a society that, for 40 years, has predominantly cast men as the sole perpetrators of domestic violence? The current article seeks to understand the reasons underpinning the overarching societal beliefs around gender and IPV and why male victims are evidently viewed as 'the minority man'. Finally, as a big believer in 'actions speak louder than words' I shall also point towards some recommendations for how we, as a society, should address this plight.

Effects of gender roles and stereotyping

The overarching societal belief of what it means to be male or female is influenced by gender stereotypes. Addis and Mahalik (2003) refer to the emotional stoicism and toughness that is applauded as a positive aspect of masculinity. Steinmetz (1978) highlights the culturally prescribed norms ascribed to gender, making reference to comics in which husbands deviate from their norm of being strong, assertive and intelligent, thus making their wives justified in chastising their them for not living up to their ascribed gender role. These gender-role stereotypes are so entrenched that, historically, when people deviate from them there has been a price to pay. This has been documented historically by making men who were victimised by their wives into the objects of ridicule, with a medieval European practice called charivari, which involved riding the male victim of IPV on a donkey around town and punching his genitals (George, 1994).

Dutton and White (2013) make reference to the stereotype underlying 'domestic violence' of a bullying, domineering man who intimidates and assaults their non-violent female partner. Stereotypes of male aggression have some grounding, with a meta-analysis finding men were more likely to inflict an injury than women in intimate, heterosexual relationships (Archer, 2000). However, this study also found that women were slightly more likely to use one or more acts of physical aggression than men. Additionally, more recent research has examined more closely the differences between male and female aggression. Where boys are more likely to engage in overt aggressive behaviours such as a physical or verbal assault, girls have been shown to display forms of indirect aggression, such as gossip (Hess & Hagen, 2006).

Gender biases are highly influential in affecting people's perceptions of the severity of IPV. A large-scale study (Sorenson & Taylor, 2005) found that acts were more likely to be perceived as abusive if they were executed by men. Qualitative research that examined the experiences of counsellors working with male survivors of female-perpetrated IPV (Hogan et al., 2012) also reported a lack of recognition within society that men can also be affected by IPV. In this study the lack of recognition influenced the client's willingness to identify themselves as victims/survivors of IPV. Additionally, research by Follingstad et al. (2004) highlighted that this gender bias is also true of psychologists, with rates of a husband's behaviours being judged as more psychologically abusive and severe than the wife's use of the same actions. Thus, even psychologists, with their focus on the study of human behaviour, are not immune from gender biases, indicating the need for further research and promoting awareness of men's experiences of IPV. The inclusion of a taught workshop on doctoral training programmes, or as part of qualified psychologists' continuing professional development, addressing the experiences of male and female survivors would be helpful in order to begin to address this bias. Thinking about local domestic violence services, it is my view, as a

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Pizzey, E., Shackleton, J. R. & Urwin, P.

counselling psychologist, that services that support men should be nationally funded and made available, just as society has for female survivors. Services tailored to men would allow a safe space to explore and process their feelings of rage and loss and work through their post-traumatic stress symptoms in a containing therapeutic environment. Group interventions overseen by a skilled professional where men can share their experiences and thus lower their sense of isolation and stigmatisation may also be beneficial. In order for such services to develop, the issue of IPV towards men needs to be made more public in order for services to be provided with funding. By providing therapeutic services where men have the experience of being heard and validated, it is likely that men will be less likely to remain in abusive relationships and thus less police intervention will be needed.

Intimate partner violence and the criminal justice system

The criminal justice system (CJS) aims to reduce the prevalence of domestic violence and ultimately bring about justice. However, the traditional feminist view of IPV is still dominant at levels as high as the Crown Prosecution Service. The Director of Public Prosecutions (CPS, 2011) made a speech, available on the CPS website, referring solely to female victims, with no mention of male victims. In a review of the literature of the effectiveness of protection orders issued in incidents of intimate partner violence, Russell (2012) reported that men were less likely to receive a protection order than women, and female perpetrators who had violated their protection orders were less likely to be convicted and arrested than male perpetrators. This further suggests reluctance by the CJS to take the claims of men seriously. It appears that the gender paradigm has a heavy influence within the legal system and the focus upon CJS statistics underestimates the rate and severity of female-perpetrated IPV towards men.

George (2007) argued that prejudice against men is extreme and has led to underreporting by the police, with more men being put into the CJS if countercharges are made against them. Sorenson and Taylor (2005) also reported that respondents judged the same behaviour when performed by a man as actionable, in that it should be illegal, but not when it was performed by a woman. Thus it is highly likely that police and other CJS professionals are influenced by these gender biases. In order for criminal justice to take place, there needs to be a perpetrator and a victim, hence it is not surprising that mutually violent couples are divided in this way via police intervention (Dutton & White, 2013). Within my research (McCarrick et al., in press) the predominant experience is of men being arrested under false charges of IPV and their disclosures of victimisation not being taken seriously, despite having evidence.

Ultimately, the societal view impacts upon the way authorities deal with domestic situations, with findings signifying discrimination against men, which in turn impacts on the likelihood of men seeking support (Hogan et al, 2012). Taking this into account, there appears to be an influence at a top level, with the government not sufficiently recognising male survivors and at a grassroots level, with research displaying that men who do seek support from the police or social services are sometimes ignored (George & Yarwood, 2004). Additionally, the gender stereotypes within society appear to impact on service provisions, with Pizzey (2000) making reference to the lack of funding for men's groups. Indeed, this is something I have experienced in my training, with the loss of funding at the domestic violence charity, leading to its closure. Research has found that men are often left traumatised by their experiences of IPV, which is perpetuated by negative experiences within the CJS, such as being treated like a guilty perpetrator or feeling dismissed by the police (McCarrick et al, in press). When there was a positive experience of a police member, one who offered advice about support services for example, this appeared to reduce the negative psychological impact of being arrested under false charges. These findings point towards the necessity of setting up psycho-educational workshops for CJS professionals in order to provide an understanding of the emotional experience of men and encourage a more balanced, gender-informed perspective of IPV.

Conclusions

Forty years of feminist campaigning and the influence of gender stereotypes have had a major impact on how society views IPV. The argument in this article is that both genders can affected by partner violence, but currently there exist a number of biases in addressing this. Campaigners and researchers made waves in the 1970s, which had a positive impact and improved service provision for women. I argue that it is time to do the same for men. More media coverage addressing the IPV experiences of both men and women is needed in order to educate people about this issue. Promoting awareness of the plight of male survivors may encourage men to report abuse and feel assured that they will be taken seriously.

As a final note, I would like to add that intimate partner violence is an issue that affects men and women within both heterosexual and homosexual relationships, and I would like to see increased funding to improve service provision and development in order to support all people affected by this issue.

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INTERVIEW

From civvy street to theatre of war

Jon Sutton talks to **Jamie Hacker Hughes**, incoming Society President, Military and Veteran Specialist and Visiting Professor at Anglia Ruskin University

How did your own military service influence your later career and philosophy?

I served as an army officer on a short service commission with The Queen's Dragoon Guards, in England, Germany (during the 'Cold War') and Northern Ireland (at the time of the H-block riots and Bobby Sands' hunger strike). I didn't know it at the time, but it was the best possible preparation I could have had for my later life as a military psychologist. From the moment I graduated from University College London in 1990 I was knocking on the army's door telling them that they needed to put psychologists into uniform (the last uniformed psychologists served in World War II). I'm delighted that, nearly 25 years later, in April last year, Captain Duncan Precious became the first-ever clinical psychologist to be commissioned into the British Army [see tinyurl.com/captdpr]. I'm absolutely convinced about the role that psychology and psychologists have to play in defence.

What's the extent of the problem with veterans' mental health?

'It's big. Our research tells us that up to 20 per cent of veterans suffer from psychological health problems. That's over half a million people from an estimated three million veterans according to the British Legion. A worryingly large number, given that service personnel start out as fit, healthy and selected through rigorous training. Veterans are also strongly represented in the criminal justice system and in the homeless population. And the tragic thing is that there is no one person in the Westminster government who's coordinating all this. It falls between several stools of the Ministry of Defence, the Department of Health, the Department of Justice, and so on. And the other problem is that the vast majority of people in the NHS and the Third Sector, on whom the care of veterans falls when they leave the services, know very little about what a veteran is, what experiences they have had, and what their needs are.

In 2010 the Coalition's 'programme for government' promised extra support for veterans' mental health needs. Are they delivering on that promise?

Partially. Yes, there is extra funding for Combat Stress Community Mental Health Nurses and a 24-hour helpline, and there is some specialist commissioning funding for a residential Combat Stress pilot treatment programme too. But when it comes to delivering equity and parity of NHS and local authority veteran mental health and support services, we've still got a long, long way to go. Veterans, in theory, get priority treatment in primary care (but seldom do in practice) and do not get any preferential treatment in secondary care, where it is needed. There is widespread agreement that the Armed Forces Covenant is not delivering what it could or should.

> "It's going to be a heck of a year, but I'm going to give it my best shot"

To what extent can you determine – and to what extent is it important – whether it is service that causes mental health problems, or that those attracted to the armed forces may be predisposed to such issues?

That's a good question and, as psychologists, we know a good deal about predisposing and vulnerability factors, provoking factors and precipitating factors. It's true that the armed forces, particularly the army and particularly the 'teeth arms' such as infantry, traditionally recruit from areas of high unemployment and social deprivation when individuals may be seeking to leave behind abusive and difficult pasts in the search for a better future, let alone a wage. At the same time, many parts of the forces recruit robust, balanced individuals to train for some of the more demanding roles. So, of course, it's a combination of the two, as it often is, but the rigours of deployment – particularly repeated and prolonged tours where there is daily or near daily exposure to death and injury (and this has certainly been the case in Afghanistan) – absolutely take their toll, however prepared and resilient the individual concerned.

There's also the question of whether it is the service that's the issue, or the coming back to 'civvy street'. I note your paper on deployment in Iraq actually being associated with *improved* mental health.

The paper that I wrote about how going to war can be good for you followed a group of specially selected, highly trained, highly motivated soldiers (paratroopers) on their first deployment to Iraq in 2003. They went to carry out tasks that they had been specifically trained for, carried them out successfully, with minimum loss of life and limb and returned to the UK relatively quickly, and yes, their scores on pen and paper measures indicated that their mental health had improved over their deployment. But that is, sadly, not the norm, and our research indicates that troops exposed to danger on a regular basis suffer the consequences, especially if they are young, junior and inexperienced.

Coming back to 'civvy street' is indeed a huge problem. I found it difficult enough returning from Belfast to Birmingham in 1981 after less than five years' service. For people who have given 22 plus years of service the necessary adjustments are immense. You are leaving behind not just a job, but a way of life where everything is provided – food, entertainment, pay, clothing, accommodation – and where your whole social network is based. It's a huge wrench.

Alcohol must play a part... I have read soldiers' accounts describing life as 'a bunch of lads' playing 'the ultimate extreme sport', 'drinking and drinking and drinking and having a laugh'.

It's true that drinking huge amounts of alcohol has been considered as normal for far too long and, in many cases, is expected and forms part of initiation rituals, rites of passage, celebrations and commiserations. The MoD and the three individual services – Navy, Army and Air Force – are finally beginning to get the message; things are changing slowly. When I was a young cavalry officer, a gin and tonic before lunch was common on weekdays in the mess. That's almost unheard of nowadays.

Are veterans more receptive to some forms of mental health intervention

than others? I note you use EMDR, which has often been controversial.
I do use EMDR, and when I first heard of it 20 years ago I was hugely sceptical... until I started using it. I've been using it ever since, and it's a most remarkable form of therapy and, in my experience, much more powerful than the CBT in which I had been trained in initially – although it is my view that EMDR is, in fact, a particular type of cognitive behavioural intervention rather than something completely different. The military and veterans respond extremely well to EMDR because you don't have to speak if you don't want to, and it is particularly effective for the treatment of trauma where flashbacks and nightmares predominate, although it can also be very effective in more complex cases where shame and guilt are involved. The MoD love it too because it's a NICE-approved intervention for the treatment of trauma, along with trauma-focused CBT.

Some years back we discussed a special issue of *The Psychologist* on military health, but it was scuppered when colleagues in the MoD raised concerns about how it would be received. Is this still an issue that prevents psychologists in the area sharing their good practice?
No. Not at all. Things have moved on massively and there is now a proposal to form a Military and Defence Psychology Section in the British Psychological Society, which would be a real result after such a long campaign to have one. Just in time, too, as we celebrate a century of military psychology in the UK in 2015. Military and defence psychologists, of all hues, are often right at the cutting edge of practice, as you would expect, and the formation of a Section, amongst other things, would really help in the promotion of our area of work.

Presumably psychologists of many different persuasions have a role to play in veterans' mental health.
You're absolutely right. When I was appointed head of clinical psychology for the MoD, we expanded the service to include counselling psychologists and health psychologists in addition to the clinical, forensic and neuropsychologists that we already had. And there are huge numbers of occupational and research psychologists in the MoD too – in the Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Air Force, in MoD Main Building and in the various research and training establishments. It's absolutely fascinating and highly rewarding work, and I would commend it to anyone.

And perhaps input doesn't have to be 'formal' psychology – is there a role for innovative therapies such as gardening, running, et cetera?
Of course. Perhaps running isn't that innovative after all though. It's one of the things that all military people do, and they are very good at knowing when they need to go for a long therapeutic run or to 'beast' themselves in the gym. When deployed out in theatre, in an alcohol-free environment, 'fizz', as physical training is known, is incredibly popular as people engage in 'Op Massive' in the gym in

order to return to the UK with a muscle-bound, honed, tanned body to impress their partners with. Gardening, though, is, actually, really beneficial as well. I'm mainly involved in veteran psychological health and social care research and delivery these days and am a supporter of two charities that have projects up and down the country where veterans work alongside horticultural therapists. I've seen them at work and am a big fan.

I know you're a religious man. Do you ever find it hard to reconcile this with your military involvement and scientific beliefs?
I am. I happen to be a Christian and an Anglican Franciscan Tertiary (that is to say a lay member of a religious order within the Church of England), but I really do believe that everybody has a spiritual side to them regardless of whether they have a faith or not, and that the 'spiritual' in 'biopsychosociospiritual' is an extremely important, and often forgotten, component. No, I don't find it difficult to reconcile my faith with my scientific beliefs at all. I'm not a fundamentalist and I am absolutely sure that the God that I believe in works through science and that science provides a way in which we can, perhaps, also learn more about God.

With regard to my work with the military, I very much believe in the 'just war' philosophy and that it is, sadly, necessary to have an armed force available to use as a last resort to prevent terror or tyranny. I really felt that when I was a soldier in the Cold War. The presence of very large numbers of conventionally armed troops in Germany was a real deterrent to any conflict, and I am pleased to have played my very small part in all that.

Do your own personal and professional interests chime with your priorities for the next year, as incoming President of the British Psychological Society?
In much the same way as I've been fighting over the last quarter of a century for a resurgence in military psychology, I'm going to use my term as President to seek a higher profile for the profession, a stronger voice for psychology and greater influence on policy and practice. But I'd also like to see better access, equality and transparency for our Society too.

What do you think is holding us back from having this profile, voice and influence?'
Perhaps it just hasn't been seen as a priority. But I know, from what several members of the Society have said to me since I was elected as President Elect, that they would like the BPS to be more prominent, not only in the media but having a real voice and influence on policy and legislation. This is all now in the Strategic Plan and we have the necessary mechanisms to underpin it. We just need to be a lot more reactive, and much quicker at reacting too, telling people what we, as psychologists, know about an issue in question and demonstrating what psychology has to offer in the area. And, of course, this will require a lot of proactivity and planning and targeted communication too. I see the Society's Boards as having a crucial role, as well as our policy advice and press team and, of course, *The Psychologist*.

Sounds like you've got your work cut out! How are you going to find any time for yourself?
I'm ruthless about the way in which I handle e-mails and social media and have very firm boundaries. Downtime, alone or with family and friends, is incredibly important. I find running and singing and playing music really restorative and enjoy learning foreign languages for fun too. It's going to be a heck of a year, but I'm going to give it my best shot.

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PROGRAMME

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Dr Gavin Oxburgh, International Investigative Interviewing Research Group (iIIRG)
Dr Tammi Walker, University of Manchester

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Dr Caroline Logan, Greater Manchester West MH NHS *Foundation Trust & University of Manchester*

For detailed conference information, please visit

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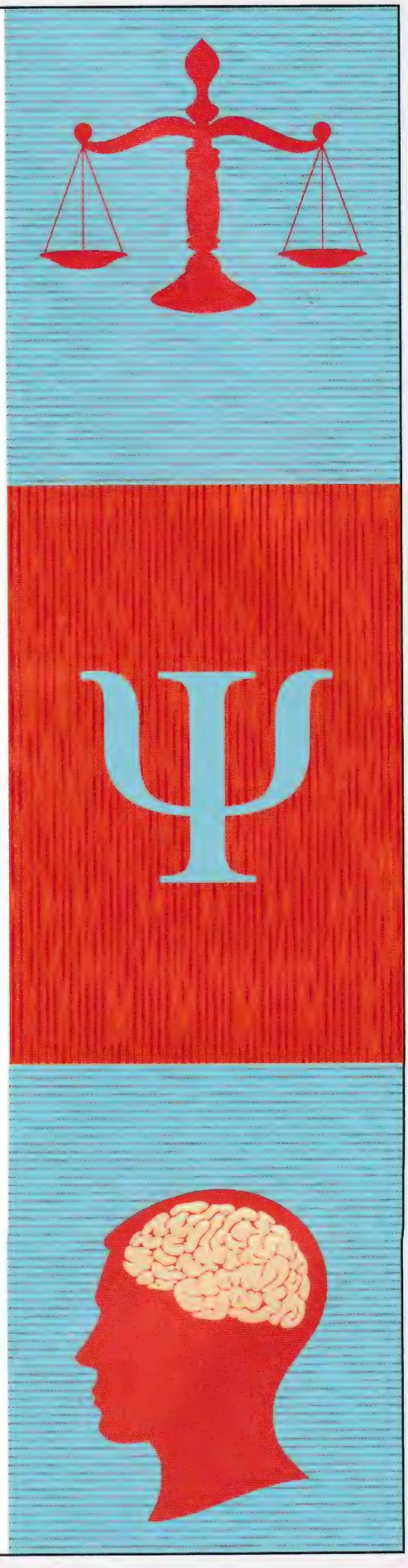


Are prisoners calmer when their cells are pink?

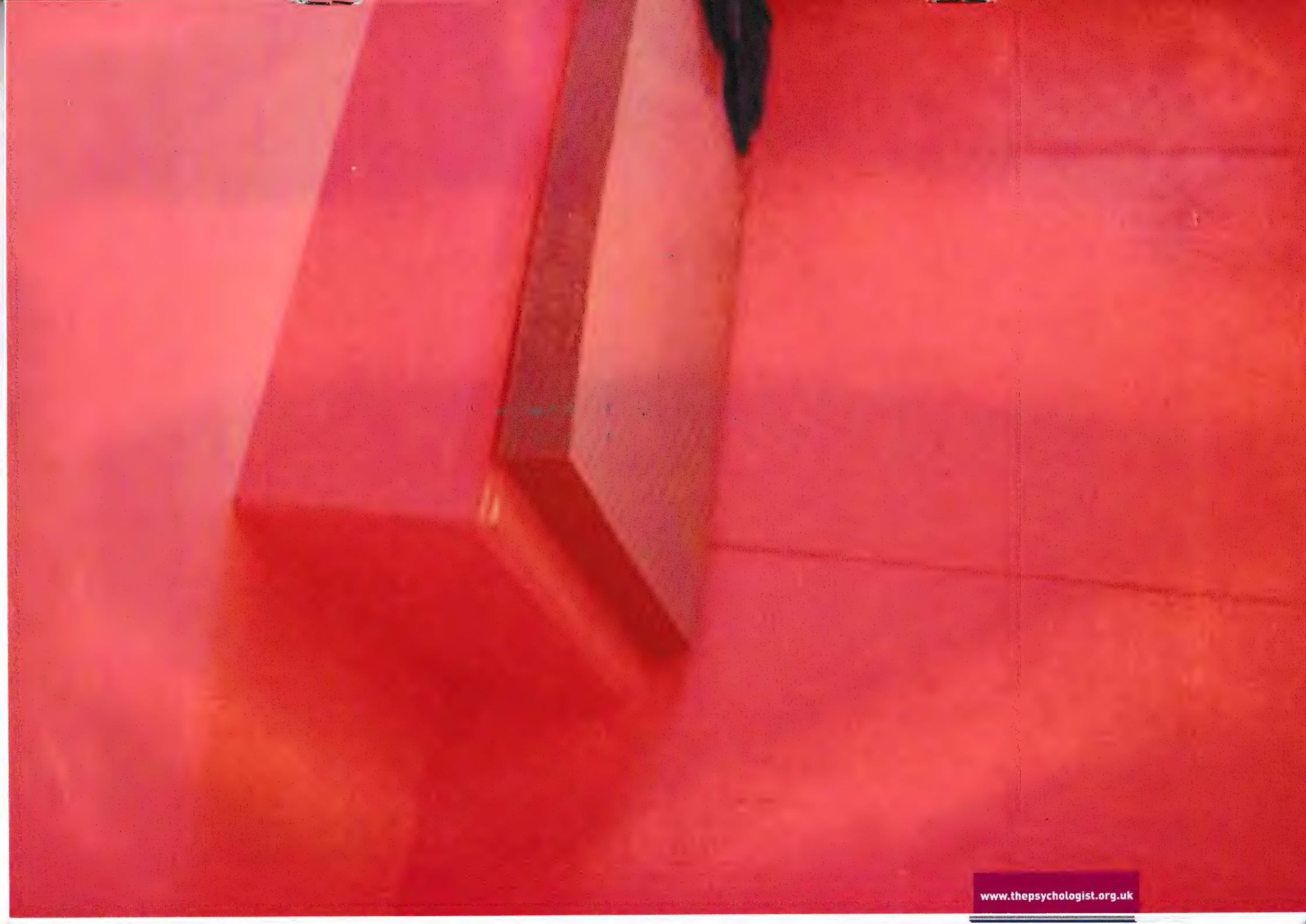
Image from research by **Oliver Genschow**. Words by Christian Jarrett for our Research Digest: see www.bps.org.uk/digest

On the back of research first published in the 1970s and 80s, an increasing number of jails in the Western world are painting their cells pink, in the belief that doing so has a calming effect on prisoners.

Unfortunately, this early research was poorly designed. But now a team of psychologists led by Oliver Genschow at Ghent University has provided the first carefully controlled systematic test of the pink cell claim. They trained guards to measure the aggressive behaviour of 59 male prisoners in Switzerland, who were placed into special detention as punishment for violating prison regulations. Half of them were randomly assigned to cells painted entirely pink, across the floor, walls and ceiling. The other half were placed in cells of identical size, but painted white, with a grey floor. Aggression ratings were taken on arrival in the cells and after three days.

The prisoners showed reduced aggression at the end of three days, compared with at their arrival, but crucially, at no time was there a difference in aggression levels (in terms of emotions or behaviour) between prisoners in the differently coloured cells. The same null result was found when analysis was restricted to just those prisoners who started off low in aggression, or just those who started off with higher aggression.

Genschow and his team said their results question the wisdom of painting prisoners' cells pink, although they admit that one reason for not finding an effect might be the sample size. 'Although 59 participants is quite a lot for such a field study, it might be too less to detect a small effect'. However, they speculate that placing prisoners in pink detention cells could even be counter-productive: 'It may attack inmates' perceived manhood and/or cause feelings of humiliation.'



The British
Psychological Society
Wessex Branch

4th Annual Military Psychology Conference

Resilience Through Change

The Ark Conference Centre, Basingstoke
Tuesday 3 November 2015

Professor Sir Simon Wessely *Director King's College London's Centre for Military Health Research; President, Royal Institute of Psychiatrists*

Professor Jamie Hacker Hughes *Director, Institute for Veterans and Families Studies, Anglia Ruskin University; President Elect, British Psychological Society*

Second call for posters and papers

(Deadline: Monday 13 July 2015)

In 2014, conference delegates were asked: (a) what gaps in our knowledge and understanding can research address?; and (b) how can the research presented be applied in practice? Responses to these questions can be found on the conference website (see below) and should be taken in to account when submitting a paper/poster abstract.

Our focus will be cross-disciplinary and will be of interest to clinical, counselling, educational, forensic, health and occupational psychologists, as well as military personnel and civilians working closely with the military (past and present), and their families. Our aim is also to bring together expertise from different professions. Perhaps you work with the emergency services? Or do you work in HR developing strategies for enabling employers to deal with the impact in the workplace of supporting reservist colleagues?

If you are interested in presenting a paper, or poster at the conference then please make your submission via the event website (below).

This event is organised by BPS Wessex Branch and administered by KC Jones conference&events Ltd, 01332 227775.

For further information, please go to:
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In search of an authorial identity

James Elander looks beyond plagiarism

Plagiarism happens so quickly and easily in these days of 'cut and paste', multiple deadlines and pressure to produce excellent work. Some students pay a high price – a survey of 93 UK higher education institutions identified 9229 formally recorded cases of plagiarism in one academic year, which resulted in 2192 formal warnings, 2372 assignments having to be resubmitted for reduced or capped marks, and 143 student expulsions (Tennant & Duggan, 2008). Many more students than that are at risk, for in one UK study 46 per cent of undergraduates reported that they had plagiarised an entire paragraph in their assignments (Bennett, 2005).

Universities therefore need active strategies to help students learn not to plagiarise, and one approach focuses on improving their 'authorial identity'. This is increasingly being used to help students to understand the values of integrity and transparency associated with academic writing, and to write assignments without plagiarising.

My interest in this began when I sat in on a first-year induction session about plagiarism. It struck me that there was not much positive advice about what to do to avoid plagiarism. The emotional tone was also negative, focusing on the dire consequences of being caught plagiarising. As I listened, I began thinking about how anti-plagiarism messages could be framed in a more positive, uplifting way. I asked myself, what is the opposite of plagiarism? Surely the answer to that is authorship, and if authorship is the desired outcome, what are the behavioural or psychological characteristics needed for students to achieve that? To qualify genuinely as the authors of their written work, students must understand the role of an author, and must be able to identify with that role. That reflection was the starting point for several projects with different groups of colleagues to help students not to plagiarise.

The process began with focus groups to explore psychology students' views about authorship. These confirmed the need for students to see themselves more as the authors of their university assignments. For example:

- 'It seems a bit grand to describe yourself as an author… it's just not a word that I would associate with myself so much unless I wrote a book. I just thought of myself as a student writing an essay.'
- 'You think of an author as a professional person who writes a book, not us.'
- 'We're just picking out what everyone else has done and trying to put it in some kind of order.'
  (Pittam et al., 2009, p.156.)

There were more positive views, however, and some of these indicated the types of assignment that could help students see themselves more as authors:

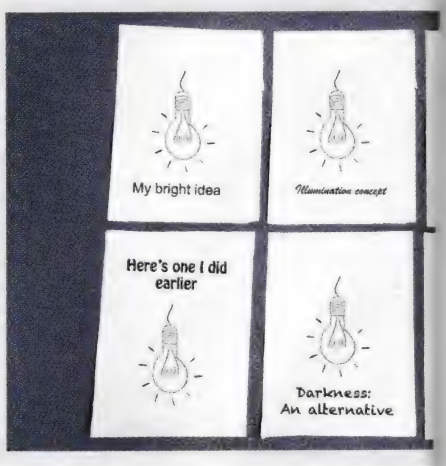
- 'Now I'm starting to think that we are authors... it might be since we've started doing projects as well, because it feels like it is your own work.'
  (Pittam et al., 2009, p.156.)

Students also explained the conflict they experienced between evidencing their work with references and giving their own analysis or evaluation:

- 'I understand that we need backup from some scientific research... but still I can't help thinking that I am editing everything, not putting my idea or opinion... or something new.'
- '…to try and get the opinions and facts sorted out rather than, well I've got loads of ideas, and suddenly it's not even science-based.'
  (Pittam et al., 2009, pp.156–157.)

We developed a workshop intervention to help students understand the concept of authorship, identify more with the role of an author, and approach their assignments in ways that helped them qualify fully as the authors of their work. This consisted of a flexible framework of concepts, activities and materials for exercises, which could be adapted for use with large or small groups.

Some parts of this were motivational or attitudinal, aiming to encourage and inspire students to see themselves more as authors, and to regard their university



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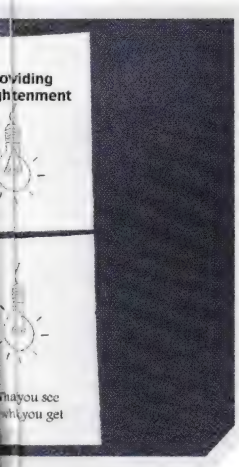
assignments as pieces of work that merited authorship. For example, we asked students about their favourite authors, and looked at statements from well-known authors about the act of writing and the role of the author.

The workshop then considered how a writer qualifies as the author of their written work. This part centred on the 'authorial decisions' that enable a writer to take the role of author. These include decisions about:

- what the message of the writing is;
- what material to use as evidence;
- how to interpret the material or evidence;
- how much importance or emphasis to put on different parts;
- what words to use and what tone to adopt; and
- what conclusions to reach.

To help students understand the authorial decision process, we designed exercises where examples of writing were deconstructed to analyse the decisions that led to those pieces ending up the way they did. For example, what decisions did the writer of a magazine article make that were different from those made by the writer of a textbook chapter on the same subject?

We also presented examples, from inside and outside academic life, where well-known public figures had got into trouble because of plagiarism. This put authorship and plagiarism in a wider context, as issues that are not confined to university students but also affect much more experienced writers of different kinds.



The case of Raj Persaud was a helpful example, and not just because he was a well-known psychiatrist and psychologist who had been accused of plagiarism. Persaud had got into trouble after copying from previously published work in his books and articles. As a result he had been found guilty of bringing his profession into disrepute, and was suspended from practice. The explanations he gave in mitigation – like the stress he was under at the time, the multiple deadlines he was working to, and the word-processing errors and other mistakes that led to references being left out of his work – were just like the excuses offered by students accused of plagiarism. Even successful, high-achieving professionals can get into hot water by not giving enough care and attention to their authorial roles.

The essence of this part was to have a more light-hearted look at plagiarism, in a way that takes the threatening focus away from students, and puts the spotlight on professional academics. We even had an example of a plagiarism expert who produced a report about plagiarism that caused him to be accused of plagiarism. That controversy centred on how material from another source was presented in the document, and the case illustrated what heated views there are about plagiarism, and how careful all of us should be about how we present our written work and source material.

Another useful example was the Labour government's 'dodgy dossier' of 2003 on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, which proved too similar for coincidence to a PhD thesis published online the previous year. More recently I have illustrated talks and workshops with examples like the case of Saif Gaddafi, son of the former Libyan dictator, who was accused of plagiarising his PhD thesis at a UK university, or the US Senator Paul Rand, who gave a speech in 2013 at a university in the United States and was soon accused of copying part of it from Wikipedia. Once I started looking out for them, I realised there are quite a lot of useful examples!

In the last part of the workshop we turned to university assignments and discussed the role of the author and the risk of plagiarism in essays, critical reviews, problem-based learning reports, research project reports, and groupwork assignments. For each of these there are specific lessons about how to approach them in an authorial way. This part was designed to be adapted so that the presenter could bring the discussion round to the students' current assignment or the coursework for the module in which the workshop took place. Students could then apply the concepts and principles they had been discussing to a real writing task of their own.

A before-and-after evaluation using the Student Authorship Questionnaire showed that the workshops improved students' understanding of authorship, knowledge about how to avoid plagiarism, and confidence in writing, and that the impact was greater among first-year students than second- or third-years or master's students (Elander et al., 2010). When students were asked afterwards about the workshops, 86 per cent agreed they helped them understand how to avoid plagiarism, and 66 per cent agreed they helped them write better psychology assignments. Focus groups after the sessions suggested that at least some students had taken the authorship messages to heart:

- 'I actually did come away with a much greater sense that you really should move things on a bit and not be afraid to put more of your ideas and understanding about where you think research is heading or any other sort of ideas.'
- 'I like the way that you were encouraged to think about what you were going to say, which for some reason hadn't really dawned on me… so you are really in the driving seat, and then take from sources to support your own perspective. So you've got a standpoint right from the start.' (Elander et al., 2010, p.166.)

However, only 52 per cent of the students in the workshops agreed they had saved them from having to ask for advice or support about writing psychology assignments, and only 40 per cent agreed they helped them enjoy writing psychology assignments (Elander et al., 2010). So even if the workshops changed some attitudes about authorship and plagiarism, they by no means provided a complete answer to all students' concerns about academic writing.

The general approach was also received quite enthusiastically, and before long many educators and researchers

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around the world had been in touch asking to use the workshop materials or the questionnaire, or both, including researchers and practitioners in Bulgaria, Canada, Portugal, South Africa, Taiwan, the UK and the USA (the materials and the questionnaire are available at tinyurl.com/l7q6k6o).

Julianne Kinder applied the concept of authorial identity to the ways dyslexic students approach academic writing, showing that dyslexic students had less strong authorial identities than non-dyslexic students (Kinder & Elander, 2012), and other researchers published reports of authorial identity among students in accountancy (Ballantine & Larres, 2012) and nursing, midwifery and health (Maguire et al., 2013). However, many outstanding issues remain. One of the key issues is the absence of a valid and reliable measure of authorial identity, for the Student Authorship Questionnaire developed by Pittam et al. (2009) was shown to have serious psychometric limitations (Ballantine et al., 2015). This was addressed by Kevin Cheung, whose PhD research focused on the nature and measurement of authorial identity, and the development of a psychological model of authorial identity (Cheung, 2014).

We hope the work on authorial identity as a psychological phenomenon can lead to more effective interventions and teaching methods to help students improve their authorial identity. For example, one application could be to tackle the problems faced by overseas and international students, for whom cultural factors or prior learning experiences are sometimes an additional obstacle to developing a stronger authorial identity. Perhaps different or specialised pedagogic interventions could be developed to help those students avoid plagiarism by adopting more authorial roles in their writing.

> "initiatives could also help students adjust quickly to learning and writing at university"

Another application could be to improve the development of students' academic writing in the transition to higher education. Pre-university students often have inaccurate expectations about what is required in academic writing at university, because they misunderstand the nature of things like argument, evaluation and analysis, while at the same time overestimating their ability to perform those complex skills (Jessen & Elander, 2009). Improving students' authorial identity might help them to understand and demonstrate academic argument, evaluation and analysis, which could help improve their learning and achievement at university, as well as reducing plagiarism. Workshops for students before they begin university can help to correct some misconceptions about writing at university (Jessen & Elander, 2009), so it is possible that pre-university authorial identity initiatives could also help students adjust quickly to learning and writing at university.

Authorial identity provides a very positive and satisfying focus for pedagogic work to help students improve their writing and avoid plagiarism. It can be applied in many ways to different aspects of student writing development, and it involves a very psychological approach to plagiarism prevention.

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President's column

Dorothy Miell

Contact Dorothy Miell via the Society's Leicester office, or e-mail: presidentmiell@bps.org.uk

The whole of the UK is in countdown mode to 7 May, and I have to keep reminding myself that the obsession with major changes looming on that date is not about our own leadership processes, since the last days of my presidential term are on almost the same schedule! We hold the Society AGM during our Annual Conference (in Liverpool ACC, 5– 8 May) and that's when I will formally hand over to the next President, Professor Jamie Hacker Hughes. At the AGM on 6 May we also announce the outcome of our own elections for the next President Elect (i.e. who will serve as President in 2016/17) and it is the point at which other new members of the Board of Trustees take up their roles, including our new Honorary General Secretary, Dr Carole Allan.

The outcome of the general election is likely to be hugely important for us as psychologists

Of course the transition within the Society is less disruptive than any potential general election outcome, since our Presidential Team work very closely with each other as well as with the staff of the Society to ensure a degree of continuity. Jamie and I have worked together for a year now (along of course with Richard Mallows, our Vice President until May), which gives more of a sense of a rolling three-year agenda for each member of the team. I have focused over the last two years on developing and beginning to implement the Society's new strategic plan as well as seeing through a review of our governance processes (begun by Richard), and Jamie is already well into the Member Network Review which he has been leading and will need to see through to implementation in the coming year(s).

The outcome of the general election is likely to be hugely important for us as psychologists, given that the various parties are all campaigning on issues that centrally affect various aspects of our profession and the people we work with. Funding and policies for education (from pre-school to postgraduate) and science, for health including mental health services, for the criminal justice system and employment legislation are all key battlegrounds for the parties and areas that psychologists are heavily involved in and so likely to be affected by proposed changes. It is incredibly important that we campaign to ensure that those who we work to support, often the least able to speak for themselves, have services not just protected but improved, and that our research is supported to uncover new and more effective ways of changing society for the better. Often this involves working with other professions and disciplines to enable voices to be heard and expertise to be listened to, and I've been really heartened to see the increased media profile for issues with clear psychological relevance in recent weeks (such as through the 'We Need To Talk' coalition, or the new BPS Impact web portal (www.bps.org.uk/impact) explaining some of the amazing outcomes of UK psychological research). Psychologists are also of course involved in the electoral process itself through offering an understanding of some of the many factors affecting voters' decision-making processes, as well as in the work on opinion polling and analysis of voting intentions, and in these areas as well the expertise of our colleagues is gaining greater visibility.

As I look back on my presidential year, apart from the frustrations about not having been able to get things changed that I'd hoped to, especially those issues and processes that so many of us have wanted to see improve for so long, I think the most positive aspects will be memories of the many individual members I have met. I'm delighted how often members talk to me about their phenomenal enthusiasm for their engagement with various parts of the profession, the discipline and the Society, and about how keen they are for all these aspects to

Spearman Medal 2015

Dr Iroise Dumontheil

A psychologist who has investigated a region of the brain at the crossroads of executive control and social cognition has been awarded the Society's Spearman Medal.

The Medal is given each year to a psychologist who has published outstanding work within eight years of completing a PhD. This year's winner is Dr Iroise Dumontheil, from the Department of Psychological Sciences at Birkbeck, University of London.

Dr Dumontheil's research examines social cognition and executive functions in adulthood and their development during adolescence. She is particularly interested in the role played by the rostral prefrontal cortex, the most anterior part of the brain, located just behind the forehead, which supports both social functions, such as understanding other people's intentions ('mindreading'), and complex executive functions, such as remembering to do something later. She has been using in her research behavioural methods, such as asking people to perform tasks on a computer, but also neuroimaging and the study of common genetic variants.

Dr Iroise Dumontheil

Dr Dumontheil obtained her doctorate from University Paris VI, although she did some of the research at UCL's Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience. She has since worked mainly in Britain, with postdoctoral positions at the Medical Research Council's Cognition and Brain Science Unit in Cambridge and UCL, except for a year spent at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm.

Her research continues to focus on the development of the brain in adolescence, but she is also interested in whether psychology and cognitive neuroscience research can inform education, and whether appropriate training intervention (such as mindfulness meditation training) can improve people's ability to regulate their emotions and focus their attention.

Dr Dumontheil said: 'I am extremely pleased and honoured to have been awarded the Spearman Medal. I feel very lucky to have been able to do my doctoral and postdoctoral research in great research departments and would like to thank my supervisors and mentors over the years: Professors Alain Berthoz, Paul Burgess, John Duncan and Torkel Klingberg, and in particular Professor Sarah-Jayne Blakemore who nominated me for this award.

'As a lecturer at Birkbeck, I am currently involved in a project, investigating the effect of mobile phones on adolescent cognition (with a team at Imperial College) and whether training children to 'stop and think' may help their performance in maths and science (with other researchers at Birkbeck and the Institute of Education).'

flourish and develop. At times when things get tough – when progress seems slow or people show their rather more difficult sides – it's that enthusiasm that has kept me going.

In conversation with the partner of a colleague of mine it was so good to hear of her commitment to both the discipline and profession and her great interest in the Society and its work, despite her not being actively involved in any of its formal structures. I'm aware that sometimes we don't engage enough with those members who aren't part of the representative structures of the Society and perhaps it's time we reminded ourselves about how important the Society pages of this publication are for that wider group – thank you, Joyce, for reminding me of this through our conversations and perhaps we can find ways to do more to use these pages to boost our dialogue with such members.

It is of course the combined force of all our members that gives the Society its power and influence, and so it was particularly gratifying to finally reach our long-awaited target of 50,000 members, and rather fittingly in the 50th anniversary year of the granting of our Royal Charter. We'll be celebrating both at the Annual Conference in Liverpool. It's also been good to see some of our international ambitions being realised, with the first accreditation visits to international universities offering psychology degrees in association with UK institutions. Extending both our membership reach and the support we can give to build professional capacity in psychology makes such an endeavour really worthwhile, and the membership staff and accrediting teams have done a great job over the last year to make this possible.

While there's a long way to go with the implementation of the Strategic Plan, I think that it was a major step forward to have agreed on our priority areas:

1. Promote the advancement of the knowledge base of psychology and its practice through support for research, education and professional training.
2. Develop the psychological knowledge and professional skills of our members.
3. Maximise the impact of psychology on public policy.
4. Increase the visibility of psychology and raise public awareness of its contribution to society.
5. Attract new members and broaden our membership base.
6. Develop our organisation to support change.

The first five are about what we want to do, but we may get nowhere with them unless we ensure the final one is achieved, and I remain very committed in my vice presidential year to work with the staff of the Society and the Trustees to ensure that the organisation is structured, managed and resourced appropriately. I'll also ensure that progress is monitored and reported on regularly, both to the Board of Trustees and to members.

So as I sign off, determined to keep pushing for improvements through working with the new Presidential Team, I'd like to thank you all for your support over the last year.

Psychobiology – where mind meets matter

Members of the Society's Psychobiology Section introduce the field and their network

Psychology is the science of mind, but in any real sense a mind cannot exist without a body in which to reside. Studying relations between mind and body can greatly inform our understanding of psychology – which is where psychobiology comes in. Psychobiology describes the interaction between biological systems and behaviour. Psychobiologists research how cognition (what we are thinking) and mood (how we are feeling) combine with biological events. Striving to understand how psychological and biological connections shape the human experience provides psychobiology with a unique perspective in psychology.

Psychobiology research covers topics such as how psychological stressors like exams can lead to heart palpitations, or how foods, such as oily fish, or drugs, such as alcohol, can impact on the brain and behaviour. To give a more detailed example, a recent psychobiology study showed how sexual risk takers, defined as individuals for whom one of their last two sexual intercourse partners was someone they had just met for the first time, showed a greater increase in the stress hormone cortisol during a laboratory stress test (Harrison et al., 2014). In this case, observing interaction between a psychological variable (sexual risk taking) and a biological one (the cortisol stress response) furthers the psychological understanding of behaviour pertinent to sexual health. It appears that sexual risk takers have some awareness of the dangers posed by their behaviour.

The same team has recently developed a novel 'real-life' stress-inducing procedure based on skydiving. They have shown that repeated exposure to this potentially life-threatening stressor does not lead to a reduction in the physiological stress response indicated by cortisol as is often seen in stressors administered in the laboratory (Hare et al., 2013). This finding indicates that it is still necessary to mount a biological response to a potentially life-threatening stressor, no matter how many times we have encountered it.

Great science, great view

The academic discipline of psychobiology is represented within the Society by the Psychobiology Section (see the Section website at www.bps.org.uk/psychobiology). The Section provides a forum for discussion and collaboration in research on psychobiological topics via our flagship event, the Psychobiology Section Annual Scientific Meeting, and by regular symposia at other psychology meetings such as the BPS Annual Conference. In so doing the Psychobiology Section fulfils the learned society function of the BPS for this area of psychology.

Our Annual Scientific Meeting is held in the first week of September each year, and for several years it has been held in the beautiful surroundings of the Low Wood Hotel on the shores of Lake Windermere in the Lake District. The meeting is open to anybody with an interest in psychobiology and provides a great opportunity to showcase research findings and for researchers to benefit from insights and suggestions from experienced investigators (see www.bps.org.uk/events/conferences/psychobiology-section-annual-scientific-meeting-2015 for further details). As well as academic papers on varied topics from mindfulness (e.g. Lomas et al., 2014) to underwater helicopter evacuation (Robinson et al., 2008) and from herbal supplements (Jackson et al., 2012) to swearing and pain tolerance (Stephens & Umland, 2011), the enduring and popular highlights of our Annual Scientific Meetings are the evening lectures provided by eminent guest speakers from the world of psychobiology.

In 2014 the best-selling author, TV presenter and academic Sir Colin Blakemore (University of London) gave a talk entitled 'What's so special about the human brain?'. Colin provided fascinating insights into the similarities and differences between the brains of humans and animals. In 2013 Professor Sophie Scott (UCL) gave an entertaining and thought-provoking talk on the neuroscience of laughter. Sophie's public profile is well illustrated by her appearance on BBC Radio 4's *The Life Scientific* (tinyurl.com/pmg2tox). She explained the important social role of laughter, whereby if one person is laughing then others are likely to join in, and also that laughter is not unique to humans because rats have been shown to laugh in response to being tickled.

Professor David Nutt presented a fascinating evening lecture in 2013 arguing that banned drugs such as cannabis, Ecstasy and LSD could be put to good therapeutic uses if only politicians were willing to sanction it. The talk, which was strongly evidence-based,

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provided food for thought and lively discussion – staples of the Psychobiology Annual Scientific Meeting. Professor Nutt has since presented these views on Channel 4 television and was the winner of the 2013 John Maddox Prize in recognition of courage in promoting science and evidence on a matter of public interest, despite facing difficulty and hostility in doing so.

Regular attendees will attest to how well the Psychobiology Section Annual Scientific Meeting facilitates networking and developing collaborative research with enthusiastic and friendly colleagues, as well as allowing delegates to keep up to date with the latest developments in psychobiology.

Young doctors

The Psychobiology Section is committed to supporting young scientists. Final-year undergraduate students whose third-year project involved research in any area of psychobiology are encouraged to enter the annual Undergraduate Project Prize sponsored by Salimetrics (it's easy and free to enter – details at www.bps.org.uk/psychobiology/undergradprize – deadline is 10 July 2015). The winner receives complimentary registration and accommodation for the Annual Scientific Meeting and they are asked to present their research to the meeting. This may seem a daunting prospect, but it is a very friendly and supportive meeting and all winners have reported finding the experience extremely positive and beneficial. For example, winner Jennifer Fisk commented: 'The Psychobiology cohort were very complimentary and have certainly helped to increase my confidence regarding research and presenting in the future.' Over recent years the winning undergraduate submissions have covered topics such as noradrenergic modulation of arousal in rats, state aggression manipulation and pain tolerance, socio-sexual orientation and olfactory sensitivity to human pheromones, and the effects of acute flavanol consumption on dark adaptation and high frequency sound detection.

Postgraduate students can apply for two free places at the Annual Scientific Meeting. Sponsored by the Psychobiology Section, these cover registration and accommodation costs for students, which would usually total £300 for the full three-day meeting (for details, see www.bps.org.uk/psychobiology/postgrad). In addition, there is a special postgraduate package allowing attendance on the afternoon of Thursday 3 September and morning of Friday 4 September including student workshop, poster presentation, keynote speaker, scientific talks and 'meet the experts lunch' at the discounted rate of £62.40. This is a first-rate opportunity for postgraduate students to develop confidence in the art of academic presenting and networking.

Catch us on tour

As well as its own Annual Scientific Meeting, the Psychobiology Section hosts a symposium each year at other academic conferences. In 2014 the Section organised, jointly with the Cognitive Section, a symposium at the Society's Annual Conference in Birmingham. The title of the symposium was 'New Directions in Cognitive Neuroscience' and the keynote speaker was Professor John Aggleton of Cardiff University. John is considered among the most eminent cognitive neuroscientists in the world, and is a Fellow of the Royal Society. He has made an outstanding contribution to our understanding of the neural basis of memory. John's keynote was on the topic of 'memory beyond the hippocampus'. He referred to anatomical, behavioural and clinical evidence to suggest that conceptualisations of memory should not place the hippocampus at the top of a neuroanatomical hierarchy, but should instead view memory as being mediated by a vast extended-hippocampal network. The talk outlined a number of very impressive studies conducted by John and his colleagues, and highlighted John's clear passion for both the cognitive neuroscience of memory and history, as John drew some very witty parallels between the neuroanatomy of memory and key historical events.

In 2015, thanks to the support of a BPS International Conference Symposium Scheme grant, the Psychobiology Section is hosting a symposium at the European Congress of Psychology at University of Milano-Bicocca, Milan, Italy, 7–10 July 2015. The title of the symposium will be 'The Psychobiology of Stress', and some of our most talented stress researchers will be presenting their latest findings.

To old friends and new acquaintances

So that's been a very quick introduction to psychobiology and the work of the Psychobiology Section. Please check out the website for details of how to become a member of the Section (it costs just £10 per year for Society members) and how to register for the next Psychobiology Section Annual Scientific Meeting. We have some fantastic guest speakers lined up, not least Professor Michael Maier (London School of Psychiatry), curator of the Corsellis Brain Collection – one of the largest collections of its kind in the world, comprising more than 6000 specimens, including cases of Parkinson's disease, Creutzfeldt Jacob disease and depression.

Each year at the Annual Scientific Meeting we look forward to welcoming old friends and making new acquaintances. Our meeting slogan does not exaggerate – on the shores of Lake Windermere the science really is as good as the view.

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Young people's mental health plan welcomed

The Society has welcomed the announcement of a five-year plan for a complete overhaul of mental health services for children and young people in England contained in a new report *Future in Mind: Promoting, Protecting and Improving Our Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing*. The report by the Department of Health's Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Taskforce found that many young people are not able to access the help they need.

Chair of the Division of Clinical Psychology's Faculty of Children and Young People Julia Faulconbridge, the Society's representative on the taskforce, said: 'The taskforce successfully engaged children, young people and parents throughout and harnessed the knowledge and drive of a wide range of people who have frontline experience of working in the field. The Society commends the accurate and succinct account of the current problems in mental health provision for children, young people and families. The evidence from our members shows that these have now reached crisis point. The report contains a powerful summary of the social, psychological and economic costs of the current lack of provision, and the arguments for change are very welcome.'

Among the report's many recommendations, the Society particularly welcomes:

- *Promoting resilience, prevention and early intervention.* In addition to the strengthening of specialist provision where needed, the report places a significant emphasis on the reintroduction and enhancement of provision for prevention and early intervention, which has been consistently highlighted by our membership as having been lost over recent years.
- *Remodelling of provision to fit the needs of children, young people and parents with integrated commissioning and provision across all settings.* This will improve the quality and quantity of provision, removing waste caused by uncoordinated services, reducing gaps and increasing the chances that children and young people are seen in the right place first time. This means that priority needs to be given to high-quality assessment and formulation at an early stage in the pathways to ensure the best starting point for intervention, using the evidence base and what is available in the locality.
- *Creating a public awareness campaign with a focus on reducing stigma.*
- *Emphasis on both the existing evidence base and the need to expand this.* Academic and applied psychologists have always been at the forefront of research to increase understanding of child development and the wider social and economic impacts on children and families. They have consistently led on the strategies for enhancing children's resilience and life chances and on ways in which they can be helped when problems arise.
- *Recognising the importance of schools.* The school environment can be harmful to young people, but it can become the place where they gain most support. Schools are very complex environments, and significant work needs to be undertaken in training and support provision to enable them all to take on a whole-school approach to psychological wellbeing. Schools are working daily with children and young people with severe and complex mental health problems as well as those in the early stages of difficulties. It is vital that there is access to rapid high-quality psychological assessment and that students are then given the most appropriate, evidence-based provision in or out of school in an integrated pathway that includes their families.
- *The recognition that current age of transition around the 18th birthday is damaging to many young people in need of services.* It is inappropriate in both developmental and social terms. The Society supports the call for flexibility and would support the development of services covering young people aged up to 25 according to their needs.
- *An increased focus on the needs of children and young people with physical health problems and how physical and psychological health are connected.* This cannot just be addressed through service provision but needs to be tackled by reducing inequality and disadvantage at a societal level rather than just trying to ameliorate their damaging effects.

Julia continued: 'The problems described in the report have been recognised by families and those working with them for many years and have now reached crisis point. Therefore the Society supports the taskforce's recommendations and hopes that these are implemented carefully by the next government with energy and commitment. The recent announcement of additional funding is a welcome step towards this.

'In addition, the Faculty will be launching a set of papers in October this year entitled "What does good look like in psychological services for children, young people and families". These will lay out the evidence and recommendations for the provision of good multidisciplinary psychological services across all settings in which children young people and parents are seen to act as a guide to commissioners and service providers in the transformation process.'

SOCIETY NOTICES

Become an Associate Fellow

The title Associate Fellow (AFBPsS) is awarded by the Society in recognition of several years' experience and contribution to the field of psychology. Becoming an Associate Fellow is a valuable way for members to demonstrate years of experience, competence and reputation in the field of psychology. Only Associate Fellows can use the designation AFBPsS. This professional title tells employers, clients and peers across all sectors, nationally and internationally, that an individual has contributed to the field of psychology through the application of specialist knowledge.

The Associate Fellow award is available to members who have satisfied one of the following conditions since first becoming eligible for Graduate membership:

- Achieved eligibility for full membership of one of the Society's Divisions and been successfully engaged in the professional application of a specialised knowledge of psychology for at least two calendar years full-time (or its part-time equivalent); or
- Possess a research qualification in psychology and been engaged in the application, discovery, development or dissemination of psychological knowledge or practice for an aggregate of at least four years full-time (or part-time equivalent); or
- Published psychological works or exercised specialised psychological knowledge of a standard not less than in 1 or 2 above.

If you would like to become an Associate Fellow, you can find the application form and further information about the award at www.bps.org.uk/associatefellow. Applicants must normally be engaged in work of a psychological nature at the time of the application. If you have any questions please contact the Membership Team on 0116 252 9911, or e-mail membership@bps.org.uk.

Doctoral Award

Research on the psychological stress experienced by sport performers and on autism and social cognition has won two early-career researchers this year's Award for Outstanding Doctoral Research Contributions to Psychology. Dr Rachel Arnold, who completed a PhD at Loughborough University, and Dr Lauren Marsh, who completed a PhD at the University of Nottingham, share the honour.

This annual award is made by the Society's Research Board to recognise outstanding contributions to psychological knowledge made in the course of completing a doctorate in psychology. Candidates are judged on the basis of one or two published articles reporting the research they carried out for their degree.

Each of the winners will receive a £500 prize and be invited to deliver a lecture based on their research at the Society's Annual Conference next year.

Dr Rachel Arnold's first paper synthesised more than 20 years of psychology research to identify and classify the many different organisational stressors that sport performers encounter. Her second paper developed and validated a new indicator to measure those demands: the Organizational Stressor Indicator for Sports Performers (OSI-SP).

Dr Arnold is now a lecturer in Sport and Performance Psychology at the University of Bath.

Dr Lauren Marsh's first paper provided evidence that children with autism, unlike neurotypical children, do not copy unnecessary actions when asked to complete a task by copying an adult. The second looks at mechanisms in the brain that allow us to understand rational and irrational actions by other people.

Dr Marsh is currently working as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Bristol in the Bristol Cognitive Development Centre. She is conducting research into how children think about ownership and possession and how this relates to their developing sense of self.

Professor Dorothy Miell, Society President, said: 'We were delighted to make awards to two such strong candidates. In both cases their work not only evidences outstanding research skills but also has clear applications and value for groups in society. The Society is delighted to see such strong examples of excellent work being done by the next generation of researchers in psychology. I wish them all the best for their future careers.'

AFTER THE REFERENDUM

Professor Steve Reicher's talk on the psychology of the Scottish Referendum at the British Psychological Society Division of Occupational Psychology 2015 Annual Conference had to be cancelled due to bad weather in Scotland through the night of 8 January 2015. DOP-Scotland's Dr Renée Bleau subsequently visited the University of St Andrews to hear his analysis, and you can view the video at tinyurl.com/p65c42o.

Professor Reicher has published widely in the field of social psychology, with some of his work being highly relevant for the field of occupational psychology. He is a recent co-author (2011) with S.A. Haslam and M.J. Platow, of *The New Psychology of Leadership: Identity Influence and Power*, and in 2001 co-authored, with Nick Hopkins, *Self and Nation*. His comments before the referendum appeared in our June issue: tinyurl.com/nrvxz47

Society vacancies

Research Board

Postdoctoral Representative

See advert p.387

Contact *Liz Beech* liz.beech@bps.org.uk

Closing date 5 June 2015

Qualifications Office

Assessors for the Qualification in Educational Psychology (Scotland) (Stage 2)

See advert p.405

Contact *Nigel Atter* nigatt@bps.org.uk, 0116 252 9904

Closing date 23 June 2015

The British Psychological Society
Promoting excellence in psychology

Calling all Postdoctorates and Postgraduates...

FUNDING FOR STUDY VISITS

The **Postdoctoral Study Visit** grant scheme provides funding for UK based psychology Postdoctoral researchers and lecturers to undertake research study visits in the UK, Europe and internationally. These are offered alongside the Society's **Postgraduate Study Visit Scheme** which provides grants to support research students who are registered for a doctoral degree in psychology at a UK university to acquire skills directly relevant to their research training above and beyond that required for the completion of the doctoral degree.

Six grants will be available under each Scheme, two in each of the following categories:

- Up to £250 for a visit to an institution in the UK
- Up to £400 for a visit to an institution in Europe
- Up to £600 for a visit to an institution elsewhere in the world

The closing date for applications is **1 July 2015**.

For further information, the full eligibility criteria and an application form please contact liz.beech@bps.org.uk

Note: The schemes do not provide funding for conference attendance or to present conference papers.

2015 CPD Workshops

Professional development opportunities from your learned Society

Introduction to evidence-based hypnosis and hypnotherapy (Cross network)	7 May
Approaches to assessing early parent-child relationships (Manchester) (DCP Perinatal Faculty)	12 May
Engaging the disengaged: Using motivational interviewing as a tool for young people and adults in education contexts (DECP)	14 May
Sharing best practice of diagnosing and assessing adults with neuro-diversity in the workplace (DOP)	18 May
Behaviour management in a trauma context (Developmental Section)	19 May
Self-publishing: How can psychologists harness the opportunities? (SGIP)	21 May
Essential neuro-linguistic skills for coaching psychologists (SGCP)	27 May
Parenting across cultures (Manchester) (DCP)	1 June
Working with offenders with intellectual disability in a forensic setting (DFP)	3 June
Peer group supervision: A structured model for facilitation of community working & professional development (Cross network)	15 June
Meta-synthesis (QMiP)	16 June
Cognitive assessment of children and young people (Day 1) Glasgow (Cross network)	18 June
Working successfully in private practice	25 June
Self-compositioning coaching: A method for leadership development (Cross network)	26 June
Cognitive assessment of children and young people (Day 2) Leeds (Cross network)	1 July
Co-creating change through dialogue (DOP)	6 July
Advanced supervision skills (DCP)	10 July
Working with gender and sexual minorities in therapy (Sexualities)	20 July
From 'ice-breakers' to creating connections to farewells: An experiential workshop to increase your skills and confidence in group facilitation (DFP)	30 July
Expert witness: Responsibilities and business (Workshop 1)	3 September
Expert witness: Report writing (Workshop 2)	4 September
Overcoming resistance to change using process consultation (Cross network)	8 September
Working successfully in private practice	10 September
Engaging effectively with the supervision and reflective practice process (Cross network)	23 September
Working with refugees and asylum seekers (Cross network)	28 September
An introduction to sleep: Psychobehavioural assessment and treatment strategies for people with insomnia (Cross network)	2 October
Pluralism in qualitative research (Cross network)	6 October
Person-centred planning: A practical introduction for psychologists (Cross network)	6 October
Supervision skills: Essentials of supervision (Workshop 1)	16 October

For more information on these CPD events and many more visit **www.bps.org.uk/findcpd**.

The British Psychological Society
Professional Development Centre

Ulster University

www.ulster.ac.uk

Ulster University is offering Postgraduate programmes in the School of Psychology in the following:

• Health Psychology (MSc) – Distance learning

This one year full-time or two year part-time BPS accredited MSc programme, delivered by distance learning will provide students with competencies in applying psychology professionally and ethically to health, illness and health care. As such, it provides the first stage of professional training to become a registered health psychologist. Applicants should normally hold at least an upper second class honours degree in Psychology which confers eligibility for the Graduate Basis for Chartered Status with the British Psychological Society (BPS) or the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI).

Northern Ireland fees apply: £4995 full-time.

For further information please contact: Dr Liz Simpson, E: eea.simpson@ulster.ac.uk

• Applied Psychology (MSc) – Mental Health and Psychological Therapies

This one year full-time or two year part-time MSc programme delivered on the Magee campus provides an opportunity for students to enhance their skills and knowledge in areas of applied psychology related to mental health practice and research. Applicants should normally hold at least an upper second class honours degree in Psychology, which confers eligibility for the Graduate Basis for Chartered Status with the British Psychological Society (BPS) or the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI).

Northern Ireland fees apply: £4995 full-time. Placement modules will have an additional fee.

For further information please contact: Dr Donal McAteer, E: dh.mcateer@ulster.ac.uk

• MSc Applied Behaviour Analysis

This two year part-time MSc programme is delivered on the Coleraine campus. Its broad aim is to give students the opportunity to develop their theoretical and conceptual knowledge in behaviour analysis and is designed for professionals who work (or intend to work) in the caring professions. Applicants should have a second class degree in psychology or related subject. An interview is also part of the selection process.

Northern Ireland fees apply: £5494 part-time over 2 years.

For further information please contact: Dr Stephen Gallagher, E: sm.gallagher@ulster.ac.uk

• Family Therapy and Systemic Practice (PgCert) – AFT Foundation Level Training

This one year part-time Postgraduate Certificate programme, delivered on the Magee Campus, provides an introduction to systemic ideas and their relevance in helping us gain a better understanding of individuals, families and the systems in which we function. The programme is fully accredited with AFT for its Foundation Level training in Family Therapy and Systemic Practice. Applicants should hold a degree or equivalent (either an existing health and social care qualification, or have completed a psychology degree), or demonstrate their ability to undertake the course through the accreditation of prior learning. In addition, applicants should have an opportunity to apply systemic ideas to a current work setting, either voluntary or paid – applicants must arrange this for themselves.

Northern Ireland fees apply: £1665 part-time.

For further information please contact: Prof Gerry Cunningham, E: g.cunningham1@ulster.ac.uk

For further information see: www.ulster.ac.uk
Applications can be made at: www.ulster.ac.uk/applyonline
Preferred date for applications: 31 May 2015 but applications may be considered after this date.

The flying psychologist

Robert Williams describes how his career literally took off in Australia

Robert Williams, a UK-trained clinical psychologist, reflects on nearly 20 years of mental health service delivery with the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia

I trained as a clinical psychologist in London, completing my training in 1985. I was fortunate to participate in an in-service training scheme with plenty of practical experience. This was to serve me well in taking on psychology roles in isolated locations. Similarly my training was eclectic in nature, and this provided me with a diverse set of psychology tools to draw on when working with a wide range of people, age groups and presenting problems.

I had emigrated previously to Australia as a teenager in 1969 but returned to attend university in the UK and, as it turned out, to spend 12 years in London, nine of which were taken up with preparing for and completing clinical psychology training. Family connections, a warmer climate and a desire to seek out new challenges in psychology led me to apply to emigrate a second time to Australia.

At my leaving party in 1986, a psychology colleague gave a farewell speech and remarked that I was heading off to Australia to become a flying psychologist! It was meant as a joke but a seed was sown, an ambition formed.

Rural and remote

When contacting the Victorian state psychology representatives, prior to emigrating, I received a less than encouraging response. Put in a straightforward Aussie manner, the suggestion was that I shouldn't bother to come to Australia due to an oversupply of psychologists – at least in Melbourne.

However, for the overriding reasons I've mentioned, I was going anyway. I arrived in June 1986 and enjoyed the reunion with my family – parents and three siblings and their new families – catching up on 12 years away from home.

I took the opportunity to travel around Australia, and this journey led me up through the centre of the continent (Adelaide to Darwin via Alice Springs) and then around the Western Australian coast to Perth, back across the Nullarbor to Adelaide and eventually returning to Melbourne. This trip opened my eyes to the wonderful Australian outback and the potential for life and work outside the major metropolitan centres along the eastern seaboard.

When I returned I recontacted the Victorian psychology people, letting them know that I was now here and could we meet up. To my surprise a voice at the end of the line said – 'thank goodness you are here – there is a vacant job up in Beechworth which we haven't been able to fill for 15 months!'

Beechworth is about three hours' drive north of Melbourne and is an old gold mining town steeped in history – part of Ned Kelly country. I worked as the only psychologist in Beechworth and the surrounding region for three years. The work was challenging and rewarding and gave me a taste of the benefits of working in more rural areas of Australia.

Following a 12-month stint in Melbourne I applied for a senior psychology position in Alice Springs, starting there in 1993. This job extended my growing specialisation in rural and remote psychology, exposed me to working with Aboriginal clients and the huge challenges that this work entails. I also flew to a fortnightly outreach clinic in Tennant Creek, a remote township 500km north along the 'Track'. This was my first taste of flying in a light aircraft.

Then an advertised job caught my eye – 'Seeking a clinical psychologist to conduct a 12 month study to assess the feasibility of providing mental health services in conjunction with the Royal Flying Doctor Service'. Location: Cairns, in far north Queensland.

Introduction to the RFDS

The Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) has been in operation since 1927,

providing emergency and primary health care services across Australia. Today it operates over 60 aircraft from 23 bases and employs more than 1000 staff to deliver a wide range of health services.

The RFDS is a federated organisation composed of a small coordinating National Office in Sydney and five operating divisions providing health services via small aircraft – Queensland Section, South Eastern Section, Victorian Section, Central Operations and Western Operations. A small Tasmanian Section serves a primarily fundraising role.

In the early 1990s the RFDS commissioned an extensive review of its operations nationally, and the resulting report 'The Best for the Bush' heralded a new era for the service with recommendations that it continue its well-known emergency role but expand its range of primary health care services to include mental health, health promotion and the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health staff.

In 1995 the Australian Commonwealth government funded a number of 'projects of national significance', and one of these involved assessing the feasibility of providing mental health services in conjunction with the RFDS. I conducted this 12-month project, which involved assessing the need for mental health services in the remote communities served by the Cairns RFDS base.

The project was commissioned because of rising concerns about the mental health effects of a continuing severe drought, with a consequent alarming increase in rural suicides. There were also high levels of trauma in Aboriginal communities, often fuelled by high levels of alcohol abuse and extreme social disadvantage.

The vast area served by Cairns RFDS base includes remote communities stretching up into Cape York Peninsula, those dotted west of the Atherton Tablelands towards the Gulf of Carpentaria and remote properties and mine sites south of the main highway between Townsville and Mount Isa. The types of remote locations vary in the Australian outback, including pastoral stations/properties, rural support towns, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, mining towns, tourist resorts and national parks. The size of the communities also varies, ranging from a few dozen to around 1000. The RFDS provides regular and emergency services to all of these, with visit frequency being determined by population size and degree of health problems.

The feasibility study, as well as assessing mental health service needs, was to consider mental health training needs of RFDS and remote area generalist health staff, and support needs of health staff exposed to trauma, as well as taking advantage of my clinical training to provide professional supervision to Cairns psychologists.

The report was titled 'Breaking the Mind Barrier', and it found that the provision of mental health services was feasible provided alongside the regular RFDS primary health care GP and nursing services. A number of patients were seen during the feasibility study with commonly presenting mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, drug and alcohol problems and relationship difficulties. Treatment could be provided on regular clinic visits to remote locations and, if infrequent, supplemented by telephone and (as the technology matured) videoconference sessions.

Staff training was conducted, which mainly focused on identification of mental health problems in the medical consultation, sometimes by simply asking the question 'How are things at home?', thereby allowing mention of current stressors and any impacts on mental wellbeing. Other practitioner skills included learning how to provide a rationale to patients for a CBT approach to depression to facilitate referral to a psychologist.

Staff who worked remotely, including RFDS staff, often encountered stressful situations, particularly related to traumatic events, and part of the project involved devising a critical incident stress debriefing programme geared to the RFDS context. The field has now changed, and a less direct interventionist approach would be taken.

The report recommended that the RFDS should employ a psychologist on a full-time basis to provide clinical, training and support services required in response to the demonstrated mental health needs.

RFDS psychology role

Following the feasibility study the RFDS Queensland Section sought to obtain funding to employ a psychologist, and I was keen to stay on with the service. I had found the work with RFDS to be stimulating and challenging as well as varied. It was a unique way to spend a working day, which required an early start around 7am, flying for a couple of hours by light aircraft to our first destination, catching up with the locals over a cup of tea and then seeing any patients who needed to be seen. Counselling was carried out in a room in the clinic, at a patient's home or sometimes side-by-side leaning over a fence. Presenting problems were extremely varied, ranging from a child with a behaviour problem to a request to make a differential diagnosis between dementia and depression in an elderly patient. Referrals were made by a remote area nurse if in existence or by the RFDS GP. Other members of the mental health team could join flights – we employed a social worker and occupational therapist. The area psychiatrist also accompanied RFDS flights on occasion.

What is perhaps surprising is that the RFDS hadn't employed mental health staff earlier. The Best for the Bush was one of the first reviews to extensively interview people who lived in remote areas, and it called for submissions from a wide range of external stakeholders. This in-depth community consultation perhaps raised mental health for the first time, and this was supported by external government reviews that highlighted the growing recognition of the need to address mental health issues and in particular to improve service access to rural and remote residents.

The result was that I became the first 'Flying Psychologist' to be employed by the RFDS, taking up the position in 1996.

Over a period of four years I provided clinical psychology services to remote communities served by the Cairns RFDS base. Initially this was primarily in the non-indigenous communities. There were common mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and drug and alcohol abuse; various stress-related issues; and some serious mental health conditions, where I either facilitated referral to a psychiatrist or provided support upon discharge from hospital.

Training of rural and remote area health professionals, including RFDS staff, got under way with the use of face-to-face teaching sessions and via videoconferencing, and culminated in the production of an interactive CD-ROM 'Psychological First Aid Kit'. This enabled staff to access training material outside the 'classroom', even working through the CD-ROM whilst in-flight. A critical incident stress debriefing programme was set up for RFDS exposed to traumatic incidents.

During this time applications were also made for further government funding to expand mental health programmes within the RFDS. From 2000 to 2007 expansion of RFDS mental health programmes occurred, as well as commencement of general health promotion sessions in remote

communities and the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. In relation to the latter it became clear early on that to maximise the effectiveness of psychology services to Indigenous patients it was of great benefit to employ and/or train Indigenous people in mental health skills. This initiative was very successful, providing cultural awareness training for RFDS staff and facilitating acceptance of the services in Aboriginal communities. Stigma was further tackled through the use of indirect activities; for example, a fishing competition for men and boys in an Aboriginal community, and holding a men's health night at the local pub. These activities introduced mental health in a less threatening way and facilitated referrals.

Commonwealth and state funding enabled the expansion of mental health services in Cairns as well as in other RFDS Queensland bases (e.g. Mt Isa). The mental health staff in RFDS Queensland went from one to 20-plus staff over this period. This enabled a more focused and regular service to a particular set of communities as well as some degree of specialisation (e.g. the appointment of staff focusing on child and adolescent mental health issues). I moved into a team management role, appointing and supervising staff and conducted some additional projects, such as the production of a second interactive CD-ROM, this one aimed at increasing mental health literacy in the general population.

My position title became Manager of Allied Health Services and included mental health, health promotion and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. I relocated to Brisbane, where the head office of the RFDS Queensland section resides.

A mission to educate

Ian Florance talks to clinical psychologist **Jane McCartney** about her book, her background and her media work

Jane McCartney has just written her first book *Stop Overeating: The 28-Day Plan to End Emotional Eating for Good*. Look her up in Google and you'll find an impressive list of academic achievements (on her Dr Jane website) as well as a variety of other mentions: articles about her book in the *Telegraph*, *Independent* and *Mail*; quotations on issues as varied as weight loss, romance and cleaning; her own pieces for magazines and newspapers. She is a Chartered Psychologist, has worked for the NHS for 11 years and in her own private practice for nine. Given this huge amount of activity, it's not surprising that we had difficulty setting up a phone interview.

We started with her book. Why had she written about that topic in particular?

'A lot of people present with problems associated with overeating. Around a quarter of the UK population are obese and there's a lot written about eating problems, but very little of that is written from a true psychological perspective. Put that together with the fact that I'm a former overeater myself and I felt I was in a good position to write something that genuinely helped, combining knowledge and experience. It's not a trivial problem either for the overeaters and their families or for the country, given the costs involved in, say, treating related conditions like diabetes.'

Jane's school achievements didn't bode well for a career. 'I left with a sorry set of qualifications. I ended up living on my own at 16 and had to work to keep the wolf from the door. But I suppose two things spurred me on. First, I'd always been good at working people out. I did every sort of job from tending bars and working as a croupier and you see all human life. At one stage I worked as a page planner and reporter for a local paper: when asked exactly why I was doing the job I answered "to see what makes people tick". Anyone who is training as a psychologist or is thinking of studying it will benefit from any job they take. Second, one of my flatmates was on a placement in a college in Essex. That influenced me. The start of my qualification journey was an A-level at night school.'

To cut a long story short, Jane took a degree in psychology at the University of Kent before taking PG Dips, an MA and a PG/Dip at London Guildhall and Metropolitan Universities. She was awarded her Doctorate in Clinical Sciences by the University of Kent in 2010.

As is often the case in these interviews, Jane's story is as much about personal experience as it is about intellectual achievement. 'When I did my degree in applied psychology the two topics that grabbed my attention were Jung and behaviourism. And, despite my less than stellar school career, I'm very determined. Once I start something I finish it, and that took me through the 16-year journey between starting a BA and achieving a doctorate.'

Jane is enthusiastic about her doctorate in clinical science. 'Clinical science courses tend to be less restricted than psychology ones. I worked on aspects of postnatal and post-traumatic conditions and had a marvellous supervisor, Dr Georgia Lepper.'

On a journey to work it out

Jane started working in the NHS in 2003 and still has a role there. 'My first NHS position after qualifying was in an adolescent unit, which was very trying as I have children. In that situation it's very difficult for any worker to keep the correct emotional distance. In my NHS work I describe myself as a general psychologist not a syndrome, population or approach-specific practitioner. I address what presents, and get clients to think about the syndromes.' She has one very specific wish for the service. 'Many GPs are very psychologically minded and do very good work. But some aren't and therefore don't. They fill in their checklists, apply a label, prescribe a drug and recommend just CBT-based services. There's an element of clock watching to get on to the next patient. All these things – pharmaceutical treatment, CBT, identification of specific syndromes – have their critical place but a more psychological approach to this would help. When clients say "I've never thought of it like that before" it means they're on a journey to working out what's going on.'

In 2007 I applied for the post of National Health Programme Manager at RFDS National Office in Sydney, relocating to a not so rural and remote office near Circular Quay! Soon after arriving I was successful in applying for further Commonwealth funding to commence mental health services to remote communities around Broken Hill and southeast of Alice Springs. As well as contract management for these new mental health services my National Office role broadened to include coordinating the health component of the federally funded Traditional Services contract (emergency, GP clinics, medical chests and telehealth consultations) and Rural Women's GP Service.

The future

I finished up with the RFDS in August 2013 after an 18-year association with the service in various roles. Mental health services are now an integral part of the health service mix in Queensland Section, South Eastern Section and Central Operations. Victorian Section and Western Operations are looking at developing services. Longreach base, established solely to provide mental health services, is still operational after 10 years, and services are well established in Cairns, Mt Isa, Broken Hill and Alice Springs. It is expected that the flying mental health workers will continue to be a part of RFDS well into the future.

Robert has now returned to the UK and is a Registered Clinical Psychologist based in London. robwilliams21@hotmail.com

my favourite quotation.'

Jane started her private practice in 2005 and, not being one to rest on her laurels, started media work. 'As I mentioned I'd worked on a local paper. I'd also been a researcher for a TV company. So, when I saw a piece in *The Psychologist* about a BPS media panel. I am now on the permanent list of commentators for certain programmes and I've appeared on *This Morning*, *Sky News* and BBC World TV as well as being interviewed in a lot of national papers.' Many professionals are suspicious or critical of such activities. 'You have to stay within your boundaries even if there's pressure to comment on areas outside them. I've refused to comment on certain issues on air for that very reason. We also need to educate programme editors to stop using people who aren't qualified. They muddy the water and, at their worst, give a totally erroneous view of what psychological science says and psychological practice does. That's why psychologists should get involved in public discussions, with other areas of activity and, of course, writing.' So, another book is on the cards? 'Maybe next year. At the moment we're developing a website linked to the overeating book.' It's at www.stopovereating.co.uk.

There's obviously a link between Jane's desire to educate other health workers in psychology, her approach to client work (in which she helps clients to think about their issues) and her aims in writing books and appearing on the media. She is a psychological educator trying to improve general psychological literacy and input psychological understanding into adjacent practices.

It sounds like a busy job, so I was glad we found time to talk.

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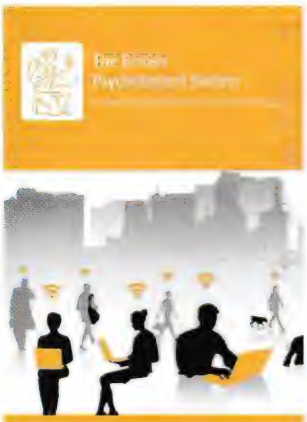

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Executive Director Search

The APS Board seeks applications for a new Executive Director to begin in late 2015 or early 2016. This search is initiated following Founding Executive Director Alan Kraut's announcement that he intends to step down from his APS position by the end of 2015 after 27 years of service.

Working within a broad vision set by the APS Board, the APS Executive Director is the organization's most consistent public and visible face. The successful candidate is expected to have the following qualifications:

- A PhD in psychological science or a related field, although exceptions will be considered if a candidate ranks high on other qualifications.
- A demonstrated commitment to the advancement of psychological science across all research areas and perspectives, and across the full spectrum of basic to applied research and training.
- Demonstrated skills, knowledge and experience in a broad range of areas and activities, including:

Management within a scientific, membership, research, or policy organization. (APS employs 35 staff, has a growing national and international membership totaling 27,000, and has a budget of $7.5 million.)

Scientific publishing. APS publishes five top scientific journals, print and online — with our flagship *Psychological Science* (published weekly online; printed monthly) the most cited journal for new research among the nearly 300 in behavioral science; *Psychological Science* and other APS journals are also on the cutting edge in promoting standards that encourage openness and transparency in research. New journals are being considered.

Public policy development. APS was the driving force behind establishing a separate directorate for behavioral science at the NSF; legislation that created the mission for behavioral research office at NIH (OBSSR), a program of support for new behavioral science investigators (B/START) at NIH; and OppNet, a $120 million+ basic behavioral science research initiative at NIH. APS also played a central role in establishing the new Psychological Clinical Science Accreditation System (PCSAS), which is now recognized by CHEA, by the VA (pending), and in various state licensing laws.

Public outreach. APS-generated articles, stories, columns, and blogs translate research published in APS journals for the broader public and are featured daily in prominent national and international print and online media: APS blogs — *We're Only Human*; *Minds for Business*; *Minds on the Road* — are visible and widely read by the public, including *We're Only Human* as a regular invited and popular feature on *Huffington Post*. APS social media connects the public with psychological science, with 36,000 Twitter followers and 92,000 Facebook Likes.

Scientific meetings. The May 2015 APS Annual Convention will have 5,000 attendees — our largest meeting ever. APS has recently organized the inaugural International Convention of Psychological Science to showcase integrative science around the world (Amsterdam, March 2015, nearly 2,200 attendees). In the past, APS organized "Summit" meetings of representatives from nearly 200 behavioral science organizations. These meetings have had significant influence on the basic research agenda in psychological science and the new clinical science accreditation system. In partnership with federal agencies and private foundations, the Association has organized and sponsored a variety of ad hoc meetings on substantive topics such as research synthesis techniques, applying the science of learning in education, a federal research agenda for psychological science, replications in research, and the role of psychological science in public policy.

Connections to allied and overlapping disciplines. Through the Executive Director, APS has taken leadership roles in the Center for Open Science, dealing with the transparency of research; in the Coalition for Health Funding and the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research, both comprising NIH constituent organizations; and in the Council for Engineering and Scientific Society Executives, comprising STEM organizations with common interests around science associations, including promotion of scientific exchange, and publishing scientific journals.

Individuals wishing to be considered as a candidate for this position should send a resume and statement of interest to:

ExecutiveDirectorSearch@psychologicalscience.org

Inquiries may be directed to any of the Search Committee members, left.

www.psychologicalscience.org

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Kick-starting a debate around suicide

I am proud to have played a small role in the BBC One documentary *Life After Suicide*, which aired in March. It was a powerful programme, tackling an important topic. The bravery of those bereaved by suicide who shared their loss was poignant and heartbreaking, but vital. Angela Samata, the presenter, lost her partner Mark to suicide 11 years ago. The programme tracked her journey across the country meeting others who have been similarly bereaved, as Angela attempted to understand why people die by suicide, to challenge the stigma around suicide and to explore the impact of suicide on those left behind. She was simply outstanding; sensitively navigating the viewer through the lives of those so deeply affected by suicide as well as telling us her own very moving story.

My involvement with the programme began some 14 months earlier, following an e-mail from a BBC producer who was researching a potential programme, which she described as 'a sensitive and thought-provoking documentary about suicide'. I was impressed by her knowledge of the topic (and that she had read some of my work!) and her awareness of the unique challenges inherent in producing such a film – so I agreed to help. More than a year later, after numerous telephone and Skype calls, a meeting in London with the director and producer and a day's filming in Glasgow, the day of transmission had arrived. Angela and I were in Salford the night before the broadcast as we were appearing on *BBC Breakfast* and on Radio 5 Live the following morning to discuss the film. That evening, we talked about how important we thought the film was, how we hoped it would start a national conversation about suicide, about its complex causes and the devastating effect it has on loved ones – but we were also apprehensive, hoping, but not knowing how it would be received.

Although my main contribution to the programme was professional (providing background information on suicide, talking about my research into the psychology of suicidal behaviour and helping Angela understand why people take their own lives), during filming I was asked about my own personal experience of bereavement by suicide. I found this really difficult and I was initially reluctant to do so, but I was persuaded by the director to talk about it – and I am pleased that I did and that a small piece of this conversation was included in the programme. For me, it has always been much easier to talk about the effect of suicide on others, being the so-called 'expert', rather than to talk about its effect on me.

However, the most difficult part about working on the programme came the Friday before its broadcast, when I unexpectedly received a preview copy of the final cut. It was difficult because Friday is the birthday of a very close friend of mine who took her own life six years ago. I was devastated by her death and it has affected me much more than I like to admit (together with the death, almost four years ago, of the man who got me involved in suicide research 20 years ago in Belfast). This coincidence was particularly poignant, especially as it was the impact of her death that I had mentioned in the documentary. It's remarkable how these coincidences happen.

Professor Rory O'Connor (University of Glasgow) talks about his involvement in the BBC One programme *Life After Suicide*.

Despite the programme being first broadcast late on a Tuesday (10.45pm in England, and even later in Scotland at 11.40pm), the response during transmission was really positive: #LifeAfterSuicide was the top trending hashtag in the UK on Tuesday night and the feedback from social, radio and print media since has been overwhelmingly positive (with many people wishing that the BBC had broadcast it in prime time). The programme seemed to resonate with large numbers of people, both those directly affected by suicide and those with no experience.

For my part, I found working with the BBC on this project really rewarding – sensitively handled from start to finish – and I would encourage others to do so should they get the opportunity. I also hope that the programme has kick-started a debate around suicide and is another small step in ensuring that suicide research and prevention are prioritised. We need to do so much more to tackle the 6000 deaths by suicide in the UK each year, and I would urge men, in particular, to talk to loved ones about how they're feeling; it is not a sign of weakness to reach out.

If you are affected by suicide or you are worried about someone, Samaritans are available 24/7 on 08457 90 90 90 (UK). They are also available by e-mail jo@samaritans.org

View this item online for further reading from our archive: Professor O'Connor on suicidal behaviour (with the late Noel Sheehy), on responsible reporting of suicide, and an interview with him. Also, 'Psychologist suicide: Practising what we preach'.

Nailing the fundamentals

Listen! Say Yes! Commit! Improvisation for Communication, Creativity, Teamworking and Leadership at Work
Harry Puckering & Julia E. Knight

Listen! Say Yes! Commit!, written by Chartered Psychologist Julia E. Knight and her colleague Harry Puckering, is an introduction to theatrical improvisation specifically promoting it as a tool for use at work. As a Chartered Psych, and long-time improviser myself, I decided to dive in and get to grips with their take.

This isn't the first book to take a more psychological approach towards the artform – see for example Clayton D. Drinko's *Theatrical Improvisation, Consciousness, and Cognition* (2013, Palgrave Macmillan) – but it's certainly the most accessible, giving a mix of reasons why to practise improvisation and exercises to get you started. On the whole most of these exercises are explained clearly enough that you could have a stab at trying them yourself, although in some cases you might be looking at each other funny and wondering 'Is this it?' – a challenge in translating dynamic, often spatial processes onto the page. There is the odd diagram, hand-drawn and with a character that complements the self-published nature of this book.

Harry and Julia nail the fundamentals of why this stuff matters: it teaches collaboration over competition, 'holding on and letting go', meaning building on what is there but having the flexibility to turn when circumstances demand it, and the formation of trust through laughter and shared endeavour.

The book contains links to the academic literature, mainly to models of leadership and communication, and the referencing is good if a little spotty in places. I applaud the authors for not over-stretching the connections, but still being able to draw my attention to research I hadn't been aware of.

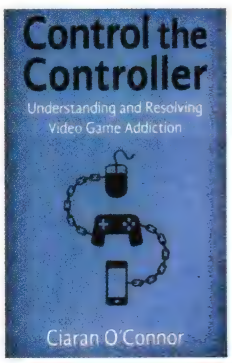
Ultimately, this book is aimed at people unfamiliar with improvisation who want to get a handle on how this might liven up an awayday, or introduce some fun habits for team meetings or brainstorming sessions. To my mind it succeeds admirably, providing an evidence base while managing to remain informal and engaging.

Lulu.com; 2015; Pb £12.50
Reviewed by Alex Fradera *who is a freelance writer and regular contributor to the Research Digest*

Informative and interesting

Control the Controller: Understanding and Resolving Video Game Addiction
Ciaran O'Connor

Video game addiction (known as VDA) is often portrayed within media as the cause of various incidents. In *Control the Controller* Ciaran O'Connor takes a fresh attitude to this subject and offers a multidimensional approach through having experience as a video game designer, psychotherapist and a self-professed 'hardcore gamer'.



Interestingly, although internet video game addiction is mentioned within the DSM-5, it is not recognised as a mental disorder in its own right and there are no standardised diagnostic criteria. Consequently, O'Connor has scope to apply his multifaceted experience to explore the interaction between video games and addiction.

The book is principally a self-help guide written for addicts, their loved ones, healthcare professionals and video game developers, with its *raison d'être* being to help its readers understand the addiction from the point of view of the gamer. It is well structured and discusses the damage, signs, causes and possible interventions of VDA, including a blend of CBT and mindfulness techniques, alongside acknowledging the pleasurable side of video games, which creates an empathetic tone.

Overall, it was engaging and having no prior knowledge of VDA it was both informative for me as a clinician and interesting as a member of Generation Y.

Free Publishing; 2014; Pb £12.99
Reviewed by Elizabeth Dewey *who is an assistant psychologist with the Glasgow Pain Management Programme, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde*

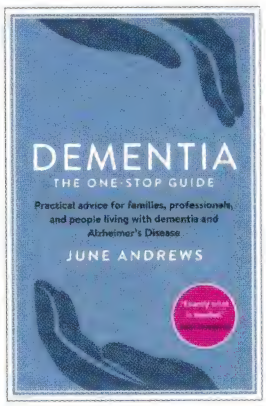
Exactly what's needed

Dementia: The One-Stop Guide
June Andrews

In this book Professor Andrews brings together science, practice and lived experience of dementia into an invaluable resource providing clear answers and practical solutions to the questions and challenges dementia brings. The book is punctuated with insightful quotations from people with dementia, friends, families and carers who tell it like it is.

In a very accessible, down-to-earth and human style, Professor Andrews outlines what you need to know and do to stay well as long as possible. There's invaluable advice about avoiding hospital admissions, dealing with professionals and planning ahead if you have dementia. The sections on the social care systems are less clear, but this reflects the diversity and complexity of services. The system is far too complex.

I wish I'd had this book on my caring journey. I would have planned ahead; I'd have practical ideas to help my parents live independently for longer with much less stress on us all. I'd have had more confidence dealing with

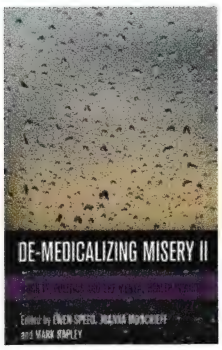


professionals and would have known I was not alone in feeling confused, invisible or frustrated. For someone who may well get dementia, the book has given me clarity, information and options for planning ahead to manage my future if I do get a diagnosis. Professionally, I'll be using the book in my work with dementia-friendly communities. The book is great for opening difficult conversations about dementia and challenging the stigma and secrecy that make living with dementia even worse.

Dementia: The One-Stop Guide is, as John Humphrys says on the cover, 'Exactly what's needed'.

Profile Books; 2015; Pb £9.99
Reviewed by Sue Northrop *who is a psychologist in East Lothian*

Reclaiming the human



De-Medicalizing Misery II: Society, Politics and the Mental Health Industry
Ewen Speed, Joanna Moncrieff & Mark Rapley (Eds.)

The first volume of *De-Medicalizing Misery* was published in 2011 and was written by an impressive cast of leading mental health experts, who together challenged the so called 'simplistic and pessimistic' biological model of human distress. This model has, with support from the pharmaceutical industry, dominated the mental health field for a long period. The medicalisation of distress enables the mental health professions to manage the human suffering that they are confronted with while knowing there is little that they can do to help. But the medicalisation of misery and madness also renders people unable to comprehend their experiences in ordinary, meaningful terms. Yet the myth of biologically based mental illness still defines our present.

This new multi-author (20 authors) work derives from a series of conferences arranged by the Critical Psychiatry Network, the Hearing Voices Network and the School of Psychology at the University of East London. Their roots lie in the anti-psychiatry movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Since the publication of the first volume the medicalisation of ordinary human experience nevertheless has continued apace and the use of drugs for mental health problems has continued to rise. Nowadays we even can diagnose and treat people on the basis of there being a possibility they might develop a mental disorder in the future! So we still live in an age when feelings of misery, stress, confusion and fear are likely to be understood as conditions that require medical-type interventions.

Several contributions in this book analyse the process by which psychiatric labelling and treatment colonises ever more corners of modern human life, while others suggest alternative ways of conceptualising human distress and its origins. The criticism that DSM-5 has received is for the authors a sign of hope, for it is seen as a sign that the vision that brain disorders require quick technical fix may have peaked.

This book rethinks madness and distress, reclaiming them as human, not medical, experiences, and tries to suggest alternatives that better represent the complex, socially and historically situated nature of human suffering. It is required reading for all who are wrestling with the one-dimensional way of looking at mental health and pathways of care.

Palgrave Macmillan; 2014; Pb £19.99
Reviewed by Dr Giovanni Timmermans *who is a clinical psychologist working in healthcare in the Netherlands*

Uniquely placed

Working with Emotion in Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy: Techniques for Clinical Practice
Nathan C. Thoma & Dean Mckay (Eds.)

This book covers a broad range of topics that encompass both traditional and non-traditional approaches to cognitive behavioural therapy. This includes useful discussion on compassion, mindfulness, image rescripting and relational techniques. The book is uniquely placed in the CBT literature in its focus on emotion as the central theme in the therapeutic process.

It is well structured, taking the reader on a journey through a wide variety of emotions followed by techniques that are relevant to particular diagnoses. This includes significant contributions from leading clinicians discussing their respective areas of expertise. At the end of each chapter, the reader is also signposted to further resources that may be useful. Although many techniques are discussed throughout the book, the authors take a holistic and evidence-based approach to therapy. Each chapter skilfully educates the reader on techniques whilst presenting a solid research base which has informed the therapeutic process.

This book will be of relevance and interest to clinicians and CBT practitioners of all levels of experience.

Guilford Press; 2014; Hb £36.99
Reviewed by Nathan Walker *who is a Counsellor at Doncaster College*

Bringing Buddhism into the clinic

Contemplative Psychotherapy Essentials: Enriching Your Practice with Buddhist Psychology
Karen Kissel Wegela

The past decade has seen the NHS slowly but surely opening its medicalised iron gates to the influx of Eastern spiritual practices. Within psychology, this influence has taken its form in third-wave therapies (e.g. ACT, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy). This growing interest is reflected in the recent exponential rise in mindfulness papers published. The release of this new book by Karen Kissel Wegela seems therefore very timely.

Wegela – a private practice American psychologist – draws on her knowledge of Buddhism to offer psychotherapeutic ways of working which honour Buddhist traditions from a more secular viewpoint, in other words, without the need to worship any big gold Buddha statues (an audible sigh of relief from the NHS purse-string holders).

Although, unsurprisingly, mindfulness is an imperative feature of the book, it also discusses fostering compassion and insight to oneself and others, alongside recognising what Wegala terms as 'Brilliant Sanity', or fundamental goodness, in our clients, as opposed to the more familiar script of psychopathology. This book shines by suggesting a myriad ways to cultivate competencies in this area, offering scripts for practical exercises and even a final chapter detailing a clear 'Mandala' visual model to use with clients and supervisors.

Interestingly, Wegela stresses the importance of the clinician's own personal meditation practice, similar to the importance of personal therapy in psychology training, something which may be missing in current mindfulness clinical practices.

My only gripe with this way of working would be the difference in the duration of therapy (sometimes one to two years) with Wegela's clients vs. NHS time-limited psychology sessions, possibly indicating the lengthy process of this work. Nonetheless, these competencies can certainly be used as an adjunct to the more traditional techniques to develop an individual therapeutic style.

With compassion being a hot topic in the NHS currently, I would surely recommend this book.

Norton; 2014; Hb £20.90
Reviewed by Eleanor Parker *who is a clinical psychologist with Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust*

A little too two-dimensional

Chappie
Neill Blomkamp (Director)

Those film-goers that are enthusiastic about robots should probably buy popcorn in bulk, because we'll all be making several trips to the cinema this year. We've already had *Ex_Machina* and *Big Hero 6*. We have *Avengers: Age of Ultron* and *Terminator: Genisys* to come.

And now we have Neill Blomkamp's *Chappie*. Blomkamp is developing a reputation as a science-fiction director of note, having already helmed the excellent *District 9* and perhaps slightly less excellent *Elysium* (though the director himself admits that he should have done better with that one). Blomkamp has now been offered the Grand Prize of sci-fi cinema, a chance to sit in the chair for the *Alien* reboot, so *Chappie* is a film that, despite a silly name, is demanding to be taken seriously.

I have to admit to approaching this film with certain trepidation, watching in the trailer a naive robot learning to be down with da kids and walk like a gangsta. But I decided to give Blomkamp the benefit of the doubt, the magnanimity granted in no small part on the film's terrific cast (including the compelling Sharlto Copley), but also because of Blomkamp's previous endeavours: from a roboticist's perspective, Blomkamp has a history of making dystopian not-so-much fantasies that pose very interesting questions about how we imagine ourselves getting along with intelligent, mechanised creatures that increasingly play a part in our everyday lives.

Blomkamp is undoubtedly committed to making popular, action-filled sci-fi films that are nevertheless a vehicle for big ideas, and *Chappie* is no different. Structurally and thematically, *Chappie* is very similar to *District 9*: we watch a story unfold of naive recklessness transformed into redemption, innocence corrupted by violence. (To say that *Chappie* is structurally and thematically very similar to *Elysium* as well might imply that Blomkamp, for all the hype, is already running out of ideas, but for now we can still try to convince ourselves that this is the mark of an auteur rather than creative draught.)

Like *District 9*, *Chappie* is set in Blomkamp's native Johannesburg of the not-too distant future, where a small army of completely automated, humanoid robots work with the human police to battle the extreme violence that threatens to engulf the city. When one of the police robots is stolen by a small gang, the robots' creator, Deon (Dev Patel), must reprogramme the damaged robot with his new 'consciousness.dat' file, giving birth to a new, artificial life form. Chappie (Copley) is re-born into a state of complete naivety, having to learn everything like an infant, and what follows is a story about the struggle to 'raise' Chappie as you would any child. (Chappie rather quickly grows into an annoying teenager, complete with irrational mood swings and a compulsive defiance of authority.)

Blomkamp regards human nature from the 'blank slate' idea that violence is something we come to learn, rather than something innate with which we are born. His robot is a vehicle through which he explores these ideas, and on that level – as a fable or an allegory – the film works very effectively as an entertaining way to look at lofty questions about human violence.

And that's fine – a good science fiction film will always say much more about human beings than it does about aliens or sentient robots or robots or wizards or any of that lot who, let's be honest, might not even exist.

So Blomkamp probably isn't really trying to say profound things about AI and robots. But then you do not expect Aesop's fables to provide profound insights into the nature of talking foxes.

However, some films have managed better to ask some deeply intriguing questions about AI. *Ex_Machina*, for example, is first and foremost a story about crises of masculinity, and about the relationship between master and slave, but nevertheless forces us to look seriously at the issue of artificial intelligence. *Ex_Machina* succeeds where *Chappie* fails for two reasons. First, the artificial intelligence in *Ex_Machina* is allowed more room to, erm, breathe. You do not look at Alicia Vikander's biomechanical face and think that she is merely a symbol. You are watching a plausible, artificial intelligence emerge from the wires and gears.

Which leads to the second problem with *Chappie*: the robot's birth is so miraculous that you cannot really credit that he is anything other than a symbol of something else. Loath though I am to criticise sci-fi on the grounds of plausibility, there are a number of obvious problems with the science in *Chappie*. Massive intelligence does not equate to emotional self-awareness. Consciousness is not something that can be written into a .dat file.

Often, in science-fiction, asking questions about the plausibility of the fiction is a sign that something else is wrong, that you are not being sufficiently carried away with the story to suspend your disbelief. And you don't suddenly declare in a fable, 'Hey! A fox can't talk!' But *Chappie* does not pose complex, or even clear, questions about AI, and you wonder if it needed to be a story about robots at all.

(Ironically, perhaps, the insentient, less intelligent robots of *Elysium* are more intriguing in what they suggest about the future shape of human–robot interactions.)

Chappie is a fine film, and an entertaining allegory on human violence. But the questions posed by Chappie himself are negligible, and so the film feels a little too two-dimensional, because without saying much interesting about AI, the film is left with the rather prosaic point that 'violence begets violence'. More science would have helped this fiction immeasurably. But here's hoping Blomkamp lets rip with radically less-credible themes in *Alien*.

Reviewed by Dr Michael Szollosy *who is a Research Fellow in the Department of Psychology, University of Sheffield, and a faculty member of Sheffield Robotics*

Remoteness and rapport

Using Skype in Qualitative Interviews with Young People
National Centre for Research Methods

In this audio slideshow, Dr Susie Weller (London South Bank University) discusses methodological considerations behind her NCRM-funded project 'The potential of video telephony in qualitative longitudinal research: A participatory and interactionist approach to assessing remoteness and rapport' (quite a mouthful!). Discussion is framed around Susie's experiences of trialling Skype and FaceTime technologies as a 'remote mode of interviewing' in this longitudinal qualitative study with young adults. With young people increasingly immersed in internet-related apps and environments, it is proposed that researchers should aim to trial related research methods to capture the interest of these 'digital natives'. Unlike telephone calling, Skype allows both audio and visual data to be synchronously exchanged and collected in real time. The ubiquity of this free, simple-to-use software on smartphones, tablets and computers means that participants can be interviewed at times and locations convenient to them. It also allows widening participation to those in isolated environments in the UK and abroad, with savings in time and money for the research team. However, these factors pose some important methodological and ethical questions. An honest reflection of the potentials and pitfalls is provided to help answer these.

Firstly, how does the distance of the digital interview affect the researcher–participant relationship? It is arguably difficult to build rapport from remote interviewing alone. Susie provides practical advice on building relationships prior to the interview, via e-mail exchanges and using such techniques as part of wider longitudinal work. Much can be gained from face-to-face interviews in travelling around the areas of participants' homes and meeting their family and friends. This absence in remote interviewing arguably provides less understanding of the participant's background and may reduce rapport. Issues with unstable internet connections may also provide a frustrating experience, whilst poor audio or visual quality may impede observations of body language and facial expressions. The suitability of such techniques for sensitive topics is also questioned. Although the researcher may be less able to give appropriate comfort during the discussion of difficult experiences; individuals may be happy to disclose more in this informal setting. This extra disclosure has knock-on ethical considerations. Does the informal, remote nature allow participants to be fully conscious of the data they are generating at all times?

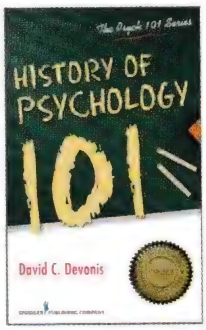
Secondly, is Skype really that ubiquitous in young people? It is important not to assume that all young people are happy to use such methods to disclose personal information. Uptake depends on the individual participants' acceptability and perceived reliability of the technology. Susie reflects from her own work that it is hence important to provide a variety of interview options. She describes how many participants still preferred telephone rather than online interviews, for reasons of shyness and security.

The presentation ends with 10 top tips to consider in the appraisal of remote interviewing techniques. What is emphasised here is the need for a full evaluation of these tools and ethical considerations alongside each specific project's aims and objectives. Such methodologies must be used only if suitable for the research in hand, not purely to be fashionable and tech-savvy.

The slideshow is on the NCRM YouTube channel at tinyurl.com/ond2tl6
Reviewed by Emma Norris *who is a PhD student at University College London and Associate Editor (Reviews)*

Tracing our roots

History of Psychology 101
David C. Devonis



The novelist Michael Crichton wrote that if you don't know your own history 'you are a leaf that doesn't know it is part of a tree'. Regular 'Looking back' articles in *The Psychologist* and history of psychology content in BPS-accredited courses show the interest in psychology's history, but some textbooks can be heavy-going. Fresh winds are blowing with this small book, which – as if to prove it is from a different mould – won the American Library Association's 2014 award for Outstanding Academic Title.

Unusually, it starts at the 1920s and each chapter tells a decade up to the 1990s and 2000s. Each weaves developments and figures in psychology into a fast-moving story with that decade's social, historical and political movements. Each covers trends in science and practice. As is common in the history of psychology now, its emphasis isn't so much on 'great men' as on the influence of the zeitgeist – the changing spirit of the age. To show life for psychologists at the time, stories based around a fictional family round off each chapter, with each generation involved with psychology. Even more unusually, the book is detailed about psychology in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. The story leaves off in the late 2000s – 'unfinished', as Devonis writes.

This book's great strength is the way it weaves psychology between events and trends in society. It shows that psychology isn't separate, watching through a one-way mirror, but that psychology and society are threads woven together in the same tapestry. Key theories and 'big names' fit into a story that makes sense, and become more human than legend. I found the focus on the 20th century more interesting, and many books neglect psychology's story from the 1970s to now. The writing style is clear and direct; I found myself looking forward to each chapter. However, the American focus is a weakness for readers in the UK: American social, political and historical events are emphasised, and psychology outside the USA hardly mentioned. Yet the book is still relevant, because much of the theory and research we rely on in the UK is part of 20th-century American psychology, or has roots in it.

This is not a book high on detail, but one that gives an epic, big picture tour of the past 90 years of American psychology. Overall, despite its American focus, this is a highly informative book that would benefit students, psychologists and aspiring psychologists. We all need to know how the jigsaw pieces of our discipline's story fit together, and how our 'leaf' fits into the 'tree' that grew us.

Springer; 2014; Pb £25.50
Reviewed by Dr Francis Quinn *who is Lecturer in Psychology at Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen*

Positive messages

By Reason of Insanity
BBC Two

I confess to being a tad dubious when sitting down to watch Louis Theroux's most recent 'access-based documentary', exploring Ohio's psychiatric hospitals and the patients who reside in them. The documentary focuses on patients who have been ruled 'not guilty by reason of insanity'; many were admitted into psychiatric care following serious crimes, and so the ethical implications of a documentary concerning such sensitive issues were very much on my mind when I began watching *By Reason of Insanity*.

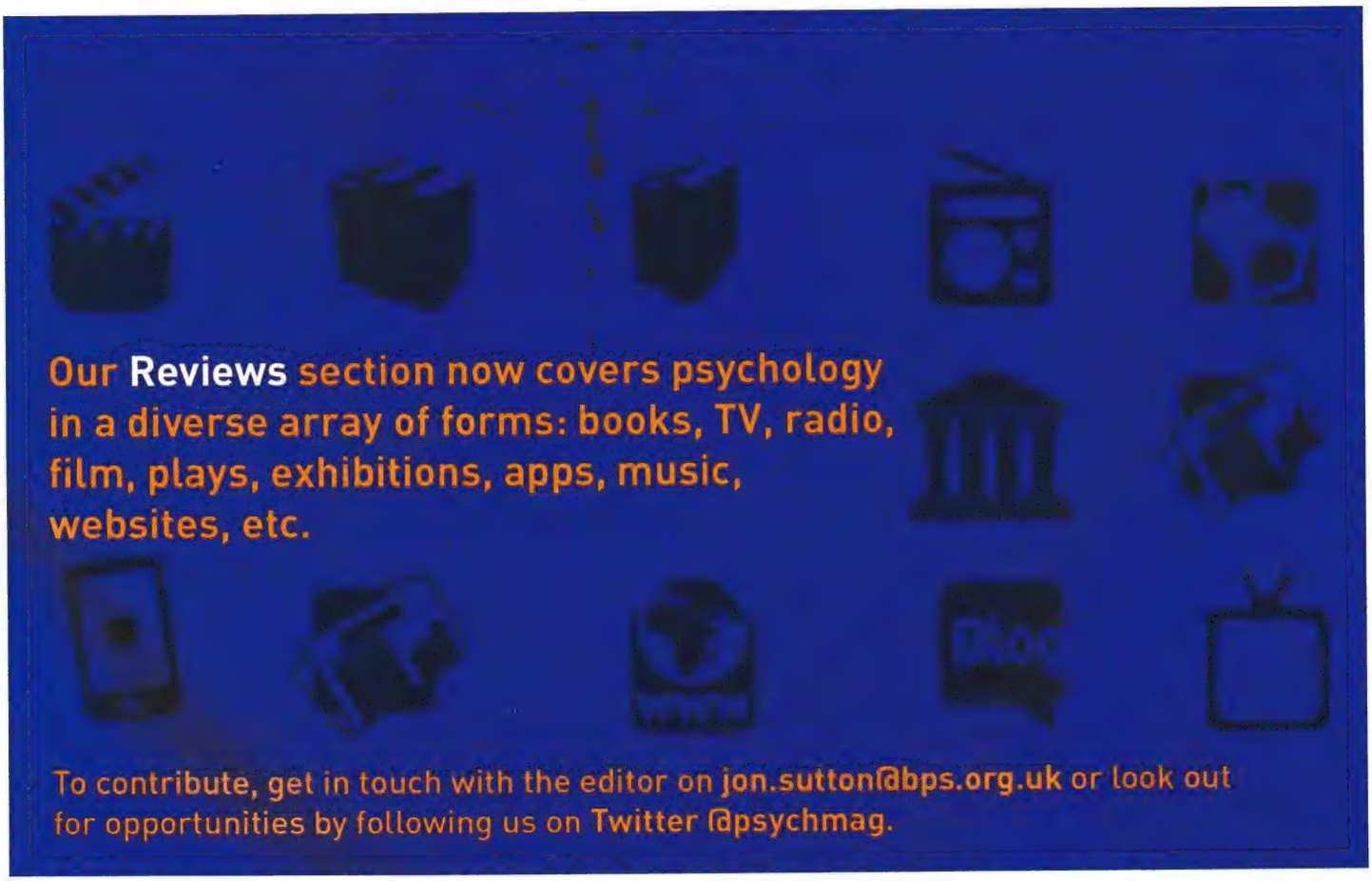
Although not the first time Theroux has focused on mental health, in my mind the filmmaker is associated with his *Weird Weekends* series, taking an often sensational and comical look at American subcultures. However, as patients were interviewed, often with their psychologists or other hospital staff present, many of my apprehensions began to dissipate. Individuals who had committed serious crimes whilst in the thrall of mental illness were allowed to speak as human beings, and presented in a way not often seen in mainstream media: as victims of their illness.

Theroux's trademark interview technique, direct and to the point, works surprisingly well, for the most part, with patients unafraid to speak frankly about their experiences, one patient telling Theroux he enjoyed being asked new and different questions, and that it's healthy to talk to people from outside of the hospital. At other times, however, interviews felt heavy handed, and on a few occasions I found myself bristling at Theroux's laughter, or insensitive pushing of an issue on a clearly uncomfortable patient.

Despite these few and fleeting moments, I thoroughly enjoyed *By Reason of Insanity*. Theroux's conversations with patients, discussing past events and future hopes, were profoundly moving, and I found myself growing fond of many of the patients involved. This is indeed Theroux's greatest accomplishment; to show that behind the headlines of crimes committed are human beings, suffering with illness but displaying resolve, hope and all the other qualities necessary in those striving for a better life, or hoping for a new beginning. Another positive aspect, similarly unusual in mainstream media, is Theroux's portrayal of the hospitals and staff; the centres appear to be happy, positive and hopeful places, and the genuine care and compassion of their staff members is obvious.

Although some of my initial concerns remain – the bluntness of some interviews, for example, or confidentiality concerns about the discussion of patient histories – individuals are, in general, treated with respect and sensitivity. Credit must be given to Theroux for presenting mental illness and psychiatric institutions in such a fresh and positive light, but the true magic of *By Reason of Insanity* comes not from the filmmaker, but from the patients he talks to. Their honesty, stories, hopes and fears show a touching, human side of mental illness, all too often neglected in the media and therefore unseen by the general public.

I Reviewed by Tom Holliman *who is a student at Anglia Ruskin University*



Filming trauma

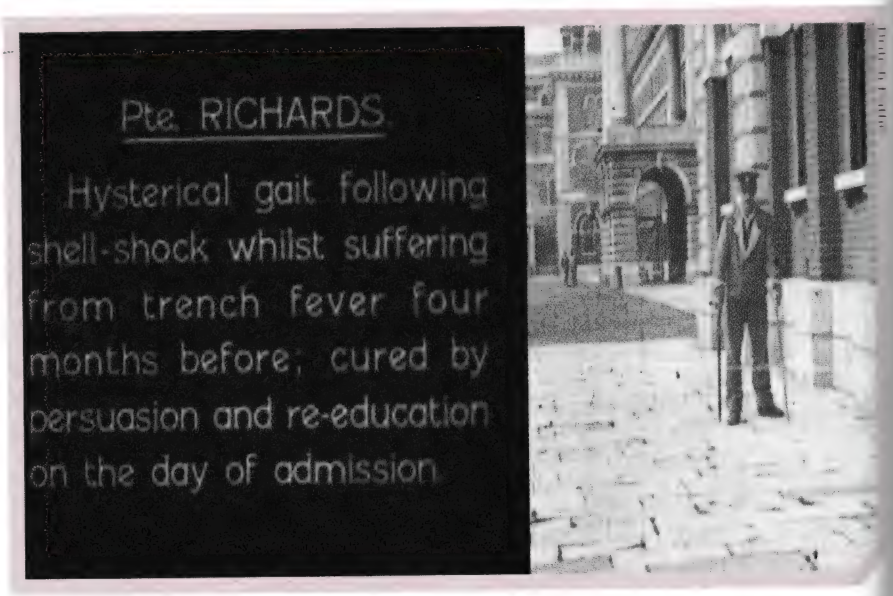
Edgar Jones explores the making of an innovative film designed to show the treatment of soldiers suffering from shell shock

Shell shock, the iconic illness of the First World War, has found an enduring place in British culture. The most dramatic representation of shell shock comes from the film *War Neuroses*, made by Arthur Hurst in 1917–18 (tinyurl.com/pm3zxqo: see also Jones, 2012). His depiction of the disorder through bizarre or disturbing movement disorders is repeatedly shown in television documentaries. So established have these images become that it is difficult to conceive of shell shock in terms other than distressing gaits, facial spasm and uncontrollable tremor. Yet recent research of random samples of case notes and war pension files showed that these presentations were untypical of the disorder (Jones & Wessely, 2005). Shell shock was characterised by an inability to function, fatigue, bodily aches and pains, together with cognitive deficits, nightmares and difficulty sleeping. So what were Hurst's motives in making the film and the treatment claims?

The making of a film

In the aftermath of the battle of the Somme, shell shock became a medical emergency. The scale of psychiatric casualties was such that it threatened to undermine the fighting strength of the British Expeditionary Force. In 1916 the Medical Research Committee (MRC) offered grants to doctors to film the disorder to aid research and promote successful treatments. Doctors at the National Hospital in Queen's Square and Hurst at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Netley secured funding. The illustrations in his textbook, *War Neuroses and Shell Shock*, suggest that Frederick Mott at the Maudsley neurological wing may also have commissioned a film of patients. Pathé cameramen, based at their Wardour Street Studios, were contracted to shoot the films, though the subject matter and editing remained in the hands of the clinicians.

At first, Hurst followed the pre-war convention of medical film: patients or body parts depicted against a plain background. These sequences were used to illustrate his lectures at Guy's Hospital. As his knowledge of the medium developed, Hurst included shots of soldiers before and after treatment to demonstrate the effectiveness of his interventions (Shephard, 2000). Inter-titles were used to provide patient histories and diagnostic terms, and most importantly to record the speed of cure. For example, Private Richards, shown with an abnormal gait at 2pm, was described as 'cured' by 3pm. Private Bradshaw who had suffered from functional paraplegia for 18 months, was 'cured after a quarter of an hour's suggestion and re-education'. Similarly, a 'hysterical contracture of [the] hand persisting 35 months after [a] wound near elbow' was apparently 'cured after half an hour's treatment'. In August 1918 Hurst and his deputy J.L.M. Symns declared in the *Lancet*, 'we are now disappointed if complete recovery does not occur within 24 hours of



Private Richards, shown with an abnormal gait at 2pm, was described as 'cured' by 3pm

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commencing treatment, even in cases which have been in other hospitals for over a year' (Hurst & Symns, 1918, p.140).

When Hurst transferred his patients from the shell-shock wards at Netley to a newly built agricultural college at Seale Hayne, near Newton Abbot, not only did he have greater autonomy but also wider opportunities to demonstrate the effectiveness of his methods. Recovered soldiers were filmed undertaking occupational therapy: cultivating fields, picking fruit, looking after cattle and poultry, basket making and firing pottery in a kiln. Having been the director and producer of the film, Hurst shot a final sequence entitled 'the Battle of Seale Hayne', in which his patients paraded in battledress with weapons and took part in mock combat complete with smoke bombs and a stretcher party. What had begun as illustrative material for lectures ended as a mini movie designed to show the rehabilitation of shell-shocked servicemen.

"...in the case of functional nervous disorders, 'cures were the result of faith and hope'"

Controversy

By autumn 1917, when Hurst began to experiment with the use of film, considerable research had been conducted into shell shock and its treatment. Two centres of excellence existed: the Maudsley led by Frederick Mott and Maghull Red Cross Military Hospital under R.G. Rows. Mott favoured a science-based approach, whereas Maghull doctors drew inspiration from anthropology and psychological texts. Each hospital had several years of accumulated expertise, and their doctors were agreed that chronic or severe cases invalided to the UK were difficult to treat. When Hurst published claims of dramatic cures supported by film appearing to show their complete recovery, experienced shell-shock doctors were taken aback. Hurst himself was a general physician with a pre-war interest in neurology and so was considered something of a newcomer to the field. How could he have achieved these remarkable results? Thomas Lumsden wrote to the *Lancet* in August 1918 to suggest that a follow-up study be undertaken at six months and a year to establish whether the cures really were permanent (Lumsden, 1918). Charles Myers, appointed by the War Office to oversee the management of psychiatric patients in UK military hospitals, was particularly concerned and visited Hurst at Seale Hayne. Myers thought that Hurst's team of doctors lacked clinical understanding and recommended that Captain R.G. Gordon, a physician who had worked at Maghull, be transferred there to give weekly lectures on psychological medicine.

So how was the film made? Recent study has shown that some of the before-and-after sequences involved re-enactment of symptoms (Jones, 2012). Sergeant Bissett, for example, was shown, according to the caption in September 1917, bent over, only able to hobble with the aid of two sticks. In the next scene, dated November 1917, he was shown walking almost normally. However, the background to both shots showed an identical group of nurses and column of smoke coming out of the chimneys of the distant huts. This demonstrates that both episodes were filmed at the same time: Bissett had been asked to re-enact his movement disorder for the camera.

Hurst was consistently vague in his publications about treatments. A visit made by William London for the *War Pensions Gazette* in 1919 was no less illuminating. Apart from reporting the rapid cure of soldiers who were mute or paralysed, nothing specific was written about the nature of the treatment. Whilst the mystery can never be fully solved, there is telling evidence. The timing of the 'cures' in 1917–18 may explain why some cases of chronic invalidity improved or recovered. 'The best tonic', Mott observed, could be offered from late 1917 and was the assurance on admission that 'under the new system of [medical] categories they cannot be found fit for service for six months, and probably that they [shell-shocked patients] will not be sent on general service again' (Mott, 1918, p.128). However, the assurance that the invalided soldier was unlikely to return to front-line service was increasingly broken as manpower demands took precedence over individual soldiers' well-being.

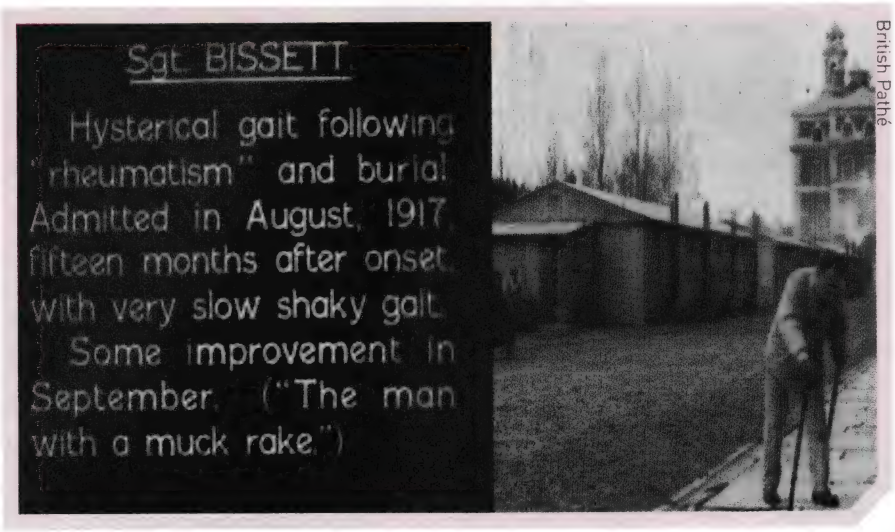
As hospitalised servicemen increasingly doubted the promises made to them, the authorities surreptitiously introduced a further regulatory change in spring 1918. Captain T.A. Ross, who worked at Springfield War Hospital in Wandsworth, recalled the visit of a medical general to the shell-shock wards. The officer authorised Ross to discharge from the army as many functional nervous cases as he could, 'though we must not say he said so' (Ross, 1944, 169). By this time, the difficulty of returning chronic cases to full duty had been recognised and it was considered better to discharge them to productive employment and free their beds for the wounded. Interestingly, Ross's account comes from a chapter in Hurst's textbook, *Medical Diseases of War*. A likely explanation, therefore, is that Hurst was also offering to discharge soldiers if they said they felt better. Ross assured service patients that if they recovered 'it was 100 to 1 that they would get out [of the army]. In marked contrast with previous cases, where I had not been able to say this, my arguments were grasped with ease and these patients soon got well' (Ross, 1941, p.71). Writing an obituary for Ross, Hurst argued that a doctor had to convey a sense of conviction when proposing a treatment because, in the case of functional nervous disorders, 'cures were the result of faith and hope' (Hurst, 1941, p.463).

Impact of *War Neuroses*

War Neuroses exercised a lasting impact – not only on representations of shell shock, but also raising expectations about the outcomes of treatment. The film appeared to provide conclusive evidence that Hurst's interventions worked. On the outbreak of the Second World War and the prospect of an epidemic of psychiatric casualties, some doctors suggested that the film be shown again to avoid the chronic invalidity of the First World War. However, Maurice Wright challenged the value of rapid methods arguing that they led to 'very frequent relapses' (Wright, 1939, p.615). This prompted Hurst to write to the *British Medical Journal* in September to defend his claims: 'our psychotherapy consisted of simple explanation, persuasion and re-education, and it almost invariably resulted in the complete disappearance at a single sitting of the hysterical symptoms even when they had been present for a year or more' (Hurst, 1939, 663). Dr John Tippet, who had worked as a psychotherapist at specialist units set up by the Ministry of Pensions immediately after the war, questioned the permanence of rapid cures for chronic patients: 'I worked in four different "shell-shock" hospitals, and relapsed Seale Hayne patients were admitted to all of them, and were generally found to have no insight into their condition' (Tippet, 1939, p.742). Persuasion and re-education were standard treatments practised throughout the UK, but Hurst never provided an explanation as to why he was successful

where others failed. Furthermore, he made no mention of the film in his 1949 autobiography.

As well as funding *War Neuroses*, in 1918 the MRC provided clerical assistance to explore the 'after-histories' of Hurst's patients to establish how permanent the cures were. Whether this research was completed remains unclear, but the fact that no follow-up study was published fuelled the controversy surrounding the claims.



Bissett had been asked to re-enact his movement disorder for the camera

After the war, Hurst returned to Guy's Hospital where he built up a reputation as a gastroenterologist. Although a talented and charismatic physician, a long-time colleague, Arthur Douthwaite, observed one flaw in his personality: 'his brilliant and versatile mind did not, however, include the power of critical appraisal of his sometimes hastily conceived theories (Douthwaite, 1971, p.314). Hurst had been precociously successful before the First World War and was aged 37 when put in charge of the neurology wards at Netley. Finding himself working on an important and high-profile disorder, his entrepreneurial flair was engaged, and once he had transferred to Seale Hayne there was no one to apply caution to his clinical ambition. However, Hurst may have learned a lesson from the shell-shock episode as the treatment programmes he offered for peptic ulcer during the Second World War had a more measured and achievable quality.

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... with Sonia Livingstone

'have and appreciate one's luxuries'

One place

I'm tempted to name the Cornish village where I go most years to clear my head, reset my balance and remember what I value – I first went with my family when I was nine and now, decades on, I take my own family there and everyone loves it. But in truth, the one place is my study at home. It's small, it's arranged exactly how I like it, it looks out onto my garden, and it's mine. It's where I think, write and dream. Virginia Woolf's recognition of the importance of a room of one's own is so true.

One children's book

This one is easy – *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll. My dad read me from this (and many other books) when I was little, referring also to *The Annotated Alice* (Martin Gardner). So I often have its wonderful aphorisms – and their deeper philosophical meanings – in my mind. I suggest there's an Alice quote for every occasion and these tend to find their way into my published work. Favourites – 'You are old, Father William' (an appreciation of the madness of age), 'When I use a word … it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less' (Humpty Dumpty – often relevant!), 'Curiouser and curiouser!' (ditto), 'Off with their heads!' (Queen of Hearts – from my days as Head of Department) and '"Do cats eat bats? Do cats eat bats?" … and sometimes, "Do bats eat cats?" for, you see, as she couldn't answer either question, it didn't much matter which way she put it' (a sentiment with which I am often in tune!).

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One revelation

Ah well, this is a bit embarrassing. I was brought up as a middle-class child of academic parents. I read *Middlemarch* before I watched television. I could talk to a poet fleeing the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia but not to my neighbours on my own street. But until my life-partner challenged me to watch a soap opera 'because that's what ordinary people do and value', I had no real idea how people lived. It was a moment of revelation. My PhD then centred on research with people about why they enjoyed soaps, exploring how they used them as an opportunity for interpretation, moral reflection and shared deliberation. And I have tried to attend to and prioritise the experiences of voices of 'ordinary people' ever since.

One regret

Of course I make mistakes, and there's many things I could have done differently, doubtless better. But I don't see the point of dwelling on what they might have been. I do periodically imagine myself retired (oddly, sitting on an American front porch watching the world go by) and wondering – did I make good decisions, did I do the right thing? I hope I will think I did.

One visit

When I finished my PhD I won a scholarship to study with anyone anywhere, as long as it wasn't in the UK or US. As a non-linguist, that was a challenge but it turned out brilliantly. I went to visit Elihu Katz in Jerusalem – a pioneer in taking social psychology into the interdisciplinary domain of media and communications, a scholar committed to public values in research, media and society, a man who loves the collaborative process of imagination, deliberation and debate. It was a wonderful few months – I wrote my first book, made research contacts that lasted through my career, and gained the support, energy and inspiration to drive me forward in those difficult years of early career, juggling family and work, finding an intellectual direction.

One radio show

I am a big fan of the BBC's World Service, which often forms the backdrop to getting up and going to sleep. It has many merits, but one programme really catches my imagination every time I hear it – *World Have Your Say*. It's partly because it's expressed as an injunction (come on world, tell us what you think!), partly the very idea that anyone anywhere might actually call in and express an opinion (yes, I know the programme is produced, but still), and partly because it simply yet imaginatively captures the idea of what I have written about as the increasing 'mediation of everything' – the world is all mediated and the media can capture the deliberative potential of the world. Maybe.

My PhD research was about why people enjoyed soaps

One album / one luxury

I've combined these two, since they take us into the territory of *Desert Island Discs*. It's many people's fantasy, and in odd moments I do try to get my music into a playlist of eight. But I'd be so unpopular – Mozart, Brahms and Verdi Requiems, Beethoven late quartets, Chopin nocturnes, Schubert songs, Russian folk songs and the Beatles (any). This tells my story, but would anyone listen? The luxury is ever changing (my cat? my laptop? *Pride and Prejudice*?) so perhaps the point is always to have and appreciate one's luxuries, whatever they are at the moment.

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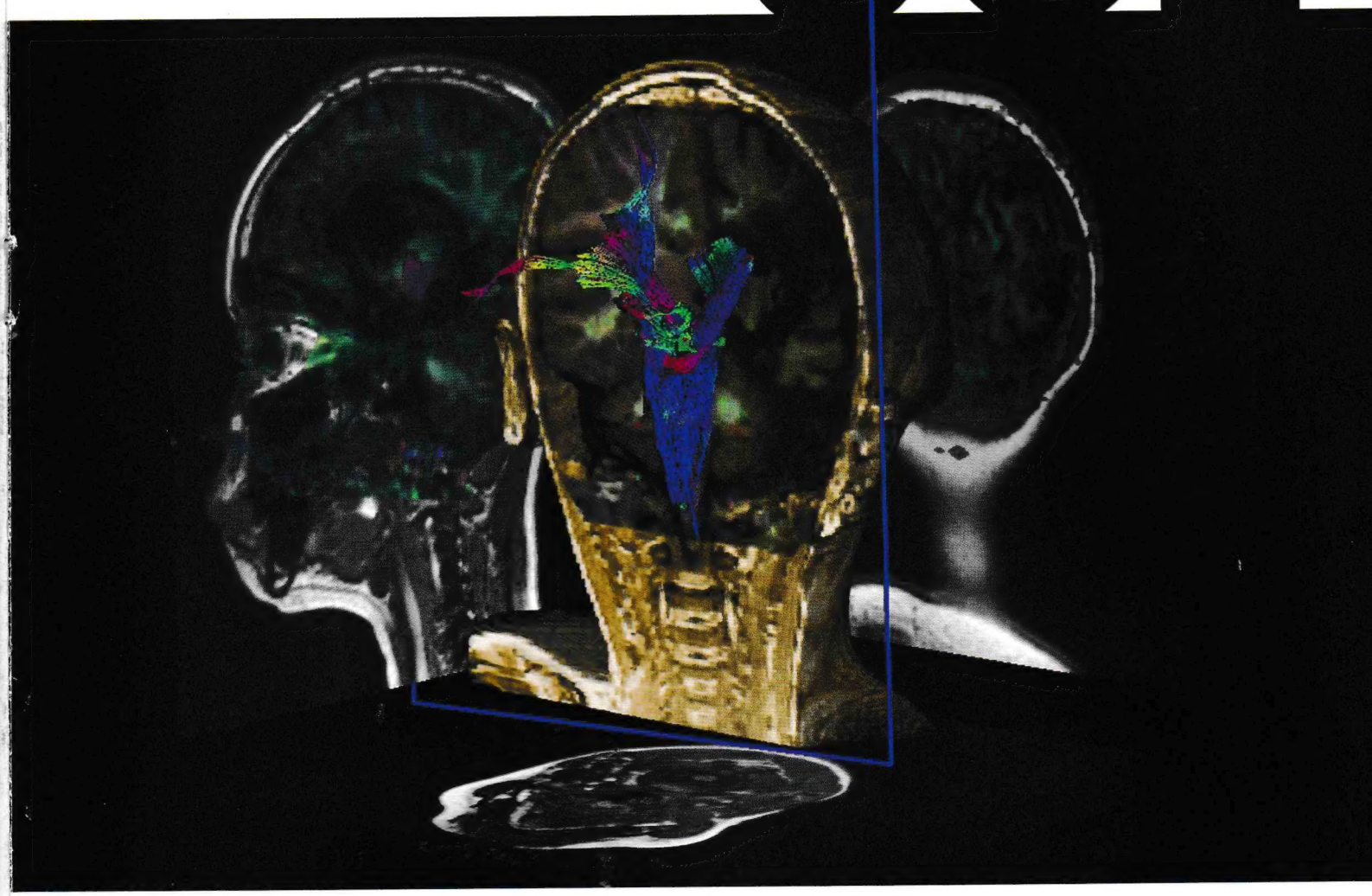

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